

MARCH HARES

^ BY ^

HARRY
WAGSTAFF
GRIBBLE



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MARCH HARES

(The Temperamentalists)

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MARCH HARES

(THE TEMPERAMENTALISTS)

*A Fantastic Satire
in Three Acts*

BY

HARRY WAGSTAFF GRIBBLE



CINCINNATI
STEWART KIDD COMPANY
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MARCH HARES

Produced under the title of

"THE TEMPERAMENTALISTS"

At The Neighborhood Club, Brooklyn, Tuesday,
June 9th, 1921, with the following cast:

MRS. JANET RODNEY.....	<i>Nannie Griffen</i>
ETHEL.....	<i>Bertha Kent</i>
EDGAR FULLER.....	<i>Fairfax Burgher</i>
GEOFFREY WAREHAM.....	<i>Alexander Onslow</i>
OLIVER.....	<i>C. Haviland Chappell</i>
JANET RODNEY.....	<i>Adrienne Morrison</i>
CLAUDIA KITTS.....	<i>Norma Mitchell</i>
THE COOK.....	<i>Nellie Griffen</i>
MR. BROWN.....	<i>Frank Dekum</i>

Stage Decoration by Watson Barratt

Incidental Music arranged by Mary Thornton McDermott

The Play Staged by the Author

Stage Manager, C. Haviland Chappell

Produced at The Bijou Theatre, New York City.
Thursday, August 11th, 1921, by The Messrs. Shubert,
and later at The Punch and Judy Theatre by the Messrs.
Shubert and W. H. Gilmore, with the following cast:

ETHEL.....	<i>Gertrude Purcell</i>
MRS. JANET RODNEY.....	<i>Lucile Watson</i>
EDGAR FULLER.....	<i>Brandon Peters</i>
GEOFFREY WAREHAM.....	<i>Alexander Onslow</i>
OLIVER.....	<i>Charles Warburton</i>
JANET RODNEY.....	<i>Adrienne Morrison</i>
CLAUDIA KITTS.....	<i>Norma Mitchell</i>
THE COOK.....	<i>Nellie Griffen</i>
MR. BROWN.....	<i>Frank Dekum</i>

Staged by W. H. Gilmore

Stage Setting by Watson Barratt

Stage Manager, Charles Warburton

Produced at the Little Theatre, New York City,
Monday, March 12th, 1923, by Inter Theatre
Arts, Inc., under the personal supervision of
Elizabeth B. Grimball

ETHEL	<i>Gertrude Purcell</i>
MRS. JANET RODNEY	<i>Charlotte Granville</i>
EDGAR FULLER.....	<i>Fairfax Burgher</i>
GEOFFREY WAREHAM.....	<i>Moffatt Johnston</i>
OLIVER.....	<i>Lawrence Cecil</i>
JANET RODNEY.....	<i>Adrienne Morrison</i>
CLAUDIA KITTS.....	<i>Norma Mitchell</i>
THE COOK	<i>Kate McComb</i>
MR. BROWN	<i>Frank Dekum</i>

Staged by the Author
Stage Setting designed by Frederick Foord
Executed by Inter Theatre Arts
Stage Manager, Frederick Foord

CHARACTERS

ETHEL, *A Housemaid*
MRS. JANET RODNEY, "*Mother Janet*"
EDGAR FULLER
GEOFFREY WAREHAM, *An Elocutionist*
OLIVER, *A Manservant*
JANET RODNEY, *An Elocutionist*
CLAUDIA KITTS
THE COOK
MR. BROWN

*The Action takes place in the House of
of Mrs. and Miss Rodney, near New
York City*

Time: Some Week-End

Act One: Just About Dinner Time

Act Two: Just About Bed Time

Act Three: Just About Luncheon Time

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(*The Temperamentalists.*)

The action of the play takes place in the tastefully decorated lounge of Mrs. Rodney's house in a suburb of New York City. The room expresses its customary occupants exactly. Mother Janet has always had a lot of choice furniture, and her daughter has always shown her how to arrange it. Mother Janet thinks that the furniture is beautiful however it is arranged, so she has not disputed Janet's disposition of it, although she would have to confess that she doesn't quite see the reason why certain pieces should be placed at just the angles that Janet has placed them. Janet has an "eye for color," and Mother Janet is of the opinion that perhaps Janet was squinting a little bit when she chose the brocade for one of the staid old chairs to be upholstered in. Since Geoffrey arrived as an integral part of the family several quite bizarre pieces of bric-à-brac have been added. Mother Janet frankly did not like them, but Janet approved of them and "placed" them, so Mother Janet has accustomed herself to them.

A Stage Director would describe the room, tersely, as follows:

On the right are two french windows, opening on to a small lawn. At the back is an opening

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leading to the entrance hall. The staircase can be seen through this. The front door is out of sight to the right of the hall, and the hall runs to the left toward the kitchen. In the left wall of the room are two doors, the upper one leading to the dining room, and the lower one to a small library. The fireplace is in the fourth wall, which has been removed so that the audience can see into the room. A glow in the footlights does duty for a fire. The main piece of furniture is a large and comfortable couch, which is drawn up before the fire. The grand piano is between the windows with the key-board down-stage. A chair stands in the curve of the piano, and another comfortable armchair is on the left of the stage, between the couch and the library door. Behind the couch is a table with a lamp, magazines, bric-à-brac and Mother Janet's work-basket.

Of course the Stage Director's description is bald, and there are many other pieces of attractive furniture in the room. The hangings and draperies are a delight to the eye. But the Stage Director's brief summary of the "exits" and necessary furniture is a concise guide to the main requirements for a troupe of actors who would like to perform the play. Practically all of the action takes place on and immediately around the large couch.

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ACT ONE

Saturday evening about 6.30 p. m. Ethel is discovered. She is looking at a photograph on the piano. She comes to it and clasps it to her bosom.

ETHEL

Geoffrey! Geoffrey! Mrs. Geoffrey Wareham!
Mrs. John Brown! Is there a God?

(The door bell rings at that moment and Mrs. Rodney enters.)

MRS. RODNEY

Ethel, if that is anyone for me I'm not at home.

(Ethel goes out. Mrs. Rodney sits on the couch. Ethel returns.)

ETHEL

Mr. Fuller calling on Mr. Wareham, ma'am.

MRS. RODNEY

At this hour? Tell him Mr. Wareham is not at home, Ethel.

ETHEL

Yes, ma'am. *(She turns to go.)*

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, Ethel, perhaps it is a professional appointment.

ETHEL

I don't know, ma'am. The gentleman has a grip.

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MRS. RODNEY

Has the grippe? Poor man!

ETHEL

No; a hand bag, ma'am.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh! a grip? Not a book-agent?

ETHEL

Oh, no, ma'am. Not that type at all.

MRS. RODNEY

Well, I hope Mr. Wareham hasn't invited him to dinner. Show him in.

ETHEL

Yes, ma'am. (*Ethel goes out.*)

MRS. RODNEY (*to herself*)

A grip!

ETHEL (*returns and announces*)

Mr. Fuller.

MRS. RODNEY

How do you do?

FULLER

How do you do?

(Ethel retires. Fuller is a very normal young man, the sort of person whom you would pass on the street without giving him a second glance. And yet if every crowd were composed of Fullers one's daily peregrinations would be accompanied by a sense of greater security. Whereas one is impressed by the unattractiveness of the average human being, and is arrested by the extreme comeliness of one in every five hundred; if, as we say, everyone were a Fuller, one could be glad that the

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human race were clean, well-groomed, tidy, intelligent and gentle.)

MRS. RODNEY

I am sorry, but Mr. Wareham has not come home from the studio. I am Mrs. Rodney, Janet Rodney's mother.

FULLER

Oh. I know Miss Rodney slightly. She gave me several elocution lessons. Er—Mr. Wareham does live here—I mean—I didn't get the addresses mixed—did I?

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, no. Mr. Wareham lives with us. He has done so for three years, in fact, since my daughter and he took their elocution studio together.

FULLER

I'm glad I haven't made a mistake. But I suppose he didn't tell you that I was arriving tonight.

MRS. RODNEY

Why, no.

FULLER

Oh. He invited me yesterday to come and stay with him for a week or so—or, in fact, for as long as I liked.

MRS. RODNEY

Really.

FULLER

Yes. So I have come for a week. I brought my grip, and my trunk is arriving tomorrow.

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MRS. RODNEY

How like Geoffrey! Do sit down, Mr. Fuller.

(He does so.)

MRS. RODNEY

I'm expecting them at any moment. They usually take the 6 o'clock from Grand Central. But just at present Geoffrey is catching the 5.50. Matters are a little strained. You understand?

FULLER

I feel that I ought to go away. Perhaps Mr. Wareham has forgotten that he invited me.

MRS. RODNEY

That is possible. He forgets most things. But he will remember when he sees you.

FULLER

But I am sure that I am inconveniencing you.

MRS. RODNEY

Not at all. And anyway I am quite immune to inconvenience. I do object to putting myself out for dull and unattractive people, but all Janet's and Geoffrey's friends are so attractive that to entertain them, no matter what the conditions, has become my second and pleasanter nature. But I am forced to tell you, Mr. Fuller, that there is nowhere for you to sleep. As you can imagine, the servants demand the best rooms, and consequently we have only one spare guest room; and that will be occupied by a lady, whom I expect to arrive this evening with my daughter.

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FULLER

I am sure I had better leave.

MRS. RODNEY

Please don't. Geoffrey would be horrified if I let you go, and he is as good at getting out of unusual situations as he is at getting into them.

FULLER

You are a wonderfully charming hostess.

MRS. RODNEY

To be a good hostess, Mr. Fuller, one has to be a mistress of equilibrium. In fact, if I had my life to live again, I should start it as a tight-rope walker.

(Geoffrey enters. Fuller rises. Mrs. Rodney rises also and greets Geoffrey. Geoffrey Wareham is one in every five hundred. He is a well-built, exceptionally good-looking man; "tall, clean-cut features, well-dressed, almost to a fault, beautifully kept hands and teeth"—this would describe him to the casual observer; these are the attributes which would make one glance a second time at him on the street; these are the points which throw him into bold relief from the average crowd of unattractive human beings. Mentally he is also extraordinary, which is generally the case with one in every five hundred, and which, with regard to a safer and more level human race, swings the balance in favor of a race of Fullers, who, as we have said, are less disquieting in their comeliness, and more restful in manner. And yet under present conditions the Geoffreys are the spice of life, and the creatures

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who help us to bear stoically the dullness of the four hundred and ninety-nine.)

GEOFFREY

Good evening, Mother Janet? How do you feel this evening? How is your indigestion?

MRS. RODNEY

I never have indigestion, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY

What do you mean? You nearly died at breakfast this morning. I tried to telephone you three or four times to hear if you were better, but the line was always busy. You must have been most conversational today.

MRS. RODNEY

The telephone was out of order this afternoon, and this evening Ethel, the housemaid, had a lot of social calls, on account of her approaching marriage next Tuesday. And please, Geoffrey, I do not have indigestion before guests. Have you forgotten Mr. Fuller?

GEOFFREY

Mr. Fuller?

MRS. RODNEY (*sitting on the couch and resuming her work*)

Yes. (*She indicates Fuller.*)

(*Geoffrey goes up close to Fuller and looks at him.*)

GEOFFREY

Oh, hello; I am so glad you came. I couldn't see who you were. You know how short-sighted I am. Of course, I invited you to stay

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with me, didn't I?—Mother Janet, Mr. Fuller will be here for a week or two, or as long as he can stand us.

FULLER (*sitting*)

Just a week.

GEOFFREY

Oh—just a week—very well.

MRS. RODNEY

So he has been telling me. I have just apologized for the lack of a bed.

GEOFFREY

The lack of a bed? What do you mean?

MRS. RODNEY

My dear boy, you know we have only one guest room, and Janet is bringing her friend home to-night.

GEOFFREY

Yes, indeed I do know. But surely there must be some odd bed somewhere in the house that can be put up in my room.

MRS. RODNEY

No, dear, every bed is accounted for.

GEOFFREY

Well, I shall send Oliver out to buy one.

MRS. RODNEY

But the stores are all closed, and you can't go out and buy a bed just as you would a tooth-brush or some potato salad.

GEOFFREY

Can't you? By the way, Fuller, do you need a tooth-brush?

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FULLER

I brought everything I need for the night, thank you.

GEOFFREY

Except a bed—but then you couldn't be expected to know that you would need that. It's a dreadful situation, isn't it?

MRS. RODNEY

Not at all. Don't worry. There will be a bed for Mr. Fuller.

GEOFFREY

Of course there will. (*He goes to the bell and rings it.*) Oliver can go to an hotel, and I shall sleep in his room, and Fuller can have my room. How simple! Why did nobody think of it before? Mother Janet, your indigestion must be worse.

(*Enter Oliver. Oliver is Geoffrey's man. He was raised in England, and service is in his blood, but he is becoming Americanized.*)

OLIVER

Yes, sir.

GEOFFREY

Oliver, go out and buy a bed, please. How much do beds cost, Mother Janet? Why do you laugh? Oh, of course we are not going to buy one after all, are we? Oliver, go to an hotel, please.

OLIVER

To a hotel, sir?

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GEOFFREY

Yes, yes.

OLIVER

Which hotel, sir, please?

GEOFFREY

I don't care. Any hotel you fancy.

OLIVER

Pardon me, sir, but what is the errand?

GEOFFREY

Errand? Errand? Go to sleep there, of course.

OLIVER

Yes, sir.

(Oliver goes.)

GEOFFREY

What a lot of questions people do ask before doing the simplest little thing. Oh, Oliver! Oliver!

(Oliver returns.)

OLIVER

Yes, sir.

GEOFFREY

Show Mr. Fuller to my room, and lay out his clothes for him.

OLIVER

Yes, sir.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, no, Geoffrey. I'm afraid dressing for dinner is a mockery.

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GEOFFREY

Why?

MRS. RODNEY

Because the dinner will be so simple. I doubt if there will be enough to eat. The cook has been making herself a new hat today, and she really hasn't had much time to devote to anything else.

GEOFFREY

That's unfortunate. What are you waiting for, Oliver?

OLIVER

To show the gentleman to your room, sir.

GEOFFREY

Well, show him. Show him. Fuller, old man, don't pay any attention to us, will you? Just keep your mind clear all the time, and eliminate things, and you'll really be quite comfortable.

MRS. RODNEY

I do hope he will, poor man. I don't wonder he is bewildered. Perhaps upstairs he will have a chance to get his breath.

FULLER

Don't worry about me, Mrs. Rodney. I like taking people as I find them.

GEOFFREY

But you mustn't take us as you find us. You must imagine we are different. Keep on imagining all the time.

FULLER

All right. (*Off goes Fuller with Oliver, upstairs.*)

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MRS. RODNEY

Well. Who is he?

GEOFFREY

Charming fellow. Comes from Oregon or Ohio or some place beginning with O.

MRS. RODNEY

How explicit! Is that all you know about him?

GEOFFREY

Practically; except that he is no relation of the Fuller's Earth people and that his passion for acting is out of all proportion to his ability for the stage.

MRS. RODNEY

He is one of your pupils?

GEOFFREY

He was, but I have adopted him.

MRS. RODNEY

Adopted him?

GEOFFREY

Practically. You see, he didn't want to come here at first, but I coaxed him, and then he said that if he came it would necessitate burning his boats behind him.

MRS. RODNEY

What did he mean by that?

GEOFFREY

I can't imagine. But of course I couldn't be under an obligation to him, so I offered him adoption as compensation for the burning of his boats.

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MRS. RODNEY

Did he want to be adopted?

GEOFFREY

Apparently. He's here. Oh, Lord! I suppose I shall have to go and draw up papers or something. What a bore.

MRS. RODNEY

I never heard of anyone his age being adopted.

GEOFFREY

Nor did I. That makes it rather unusual and charming, doesn't it?

MRS. RODNEY

Geoffrey, dear, are you quite well?

GEOFFREY

Yes, dear, thank you.

MRS. RODNEY

But, hasn't he any money?

GEOFFREY

Not much, I think. He didn't pay my bill.

MRS. RODNEY

Did you ask him for the money?

GEOFFREY

I rendered my bill, and he said, with a smile, "Well, we'll call that square, shall we?"

MRS. RODNEY

What did he mean by that?

GEOFFREY

I haven't an idea, but he said it so nicely that of course I said "yes."

MRS. RODNEY

Geoffrey, dear, I am sure you need a vacation.

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GEOFFREY

Do I? Oh, what does money matter? I can't keep track of it. Anyway, I believe he gets some occasionally from home or somewhere.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, he has a home.

GEOFFREY

Everyone has, hasn't he?

MRS. RODNEY

But why have you brought him here?

GEOFFREY

Because I'm furious at Janet.

MRS. RODNEY

I don't follow you.

GEOFFREY

Well, you have noticed the indifference with which she treats me, of course. 'Pon my soul I believe she forgets that we are engaged to be married. How dares she bring this girl into the house.

MRS. RODNEY

Miss Kitts?

GEOFFREY

Yes. Claudia Kitts. What a ridiculous name, anyway! Claudia Kitts!

MRS. RODNEY

Janet thinks a great deal of her, and she feels that she needs a companion.

GEOFFREY (*rises*)

What's wrong with me? Am I not her logical companion? And she has you. No girl ever

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had a more perfect home life with the constant love of her mother and her fiancé. This is the reason why I brought Fuller here. Janet told me that she was bringing this girl—this pupil of hers to live with us. She even had the audacity to say that she was an affinity. An affinity! Think of it! So I said to myself—"Well, if I can sacrifice three of the best years of my life to a steady concentration upon Janet, merely to be told at the end of that period that she has found an affinity in someone else—why shouldn't I look for an affinity, why shouldn't I bring back a companion?"

MRS. RODNEY

But what is an affinity?

GEOFFREY

How should I know?—Wait a minute. (*He takes a dictionary from his pocket and consults it.*) "A—accidents, adenoids, aeroplanes, affectation, affinity. Close agreement, conformity, a chemical attraction which takes place at an insensible distance between particles of bodies and unites them to form chemical compounds." How involved. But there it is. That's an affinity.

MRS. RODNEY

But you can't call Mr. Fuller your affinity. You can't even remember if he comes from Oregon or Ohio.

GEOFFREY

I could never let geography influence my life one way or another. He may not be an affinity

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at present, but when I thoroughly explain the situation, I feel sure that he will be charmed to be, or at any rate pretend to be one. If he cannot think of me as an affinity at first, but acts it well, I shall feel justified in exaggerating his ability to some theatrical manager, in order to get him a position on the stage.

(He squats on the floor, meeting the hard surface too abruptly. Mrs. Rodney inserts cushions between his posterior and the carpet.)

GEOFFREY

Thank you, dear.

MRS. RODNEY

Geoffrey, dear, why don't you marry Janet?

GEOFFREY

Marry her! Why, that's so easy. It is really difficult to be engaged to a person.

MRS. RODNEY

But why try to do difficult things, dear? I always feel that the Kaiser might have had quite a happy life if he hadn't tried to do so much.

GEOFFREY

Fancy comparing me with the Kaiser! How does conquering the world compare with conquering Janet?

MRS. RODNEY

But, my dear, you conquered her three years ago when you became engaged. She's tired of being conquered.

GEOFFREY

That's ridiculous. The mere fact that she re-

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bels against me shows that she isn't conquered. Do you know she has never once agreed with me on a single unimportant matter? That's a fine conquest!

MRS. RODNEY

You'll find she'll agree to anything when you're married.

GEOFFREY

How base! She must not be like that. She must be mine in spirit and soul before— Oh, really, Mother Janet, I'm surprised at you! By the way, will you have my dinner and Fuller's served in here?

MRS. RODNEY

Why, dear?

GEOFFREY

Because of this Kitts person. I shan't speak to her. I may have to meet her, but I certainly shall not eat with her.

MRS. RODNEY

Now, Geoffrey, you know how difficult the servants are, especially Ethel. She's nervous about next Tuesday.

GEOFFREY

What's next Tuesday?

MRS. RODNEY

Her wedding.

GEOFFREY

Oh, yes. But surely the thought of marriage doesn't incapacitate Ethel from serving food in a different room. She is behaving as if she

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were anticipating her first-born rather than her wedding.

MRS. RODNEY

Very well. You will suffer as much as I if we lose the servants. And you are the bread-winners, so—

GEOFFREY

Dear old Mother Janet. How sweet you are.

(Enter Janet. She kisses Mrs. Rodney.)

GEOFFREY

How could you have produced such a daughter as Janet, or anyway have brought her up so badly?

JANET

What's all this?

GEOFFREY

Good evening.

JANET

Good evening, Geoffrey. Have you met Miss Kitts?

(Claudia Kitts enters.)

GEOFFREY

No, I have not. But I have now. Good evening, Miss Kitts.

MISS KITTS

How do you do?

(Janet Rodney is a girl of twenty-six or seven years. She has a charming, gentle manner, which at times deteriorates into timidity. You

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might call her a Burne-Jones type, except that her eyes are rounder than his ideal, and her hair not such a vivid red as the traditional lady of his creation.

Claudia Kitts is an extremely pretty girl several years younger than Janet. She has very large eyes and very long lashes, always dangerous possessions of man or woman. That is the word which expresses Claudia better than any other—"dangerous." But many a person, naturally dangerous, makes himself quite formidable by exposing his weapons. This Claudia invariably does. She has a mission in life—a self-imposed task—which she finds great difficulty in accomplishing because she lacks subtlety of the right sort.)

JANET

Mother, this is Claudia. Isn't she sweet? I know you will love her. She has never had a home.

GEOFFREY

No home at all? How peculiar.

JANET

Why peculiar?

GEOFFREY

In order to look as healthy and tidy as Miss Kitts does, she must have had a home of some sort

JANET

Not at all. Nature provides compensation to her children for the lack of worldly advantages.

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GEOFFREY

Then is Miss Kitts a child of nature?

JANET

Certainly she is.

GEOFFREY

How interesting. Perhaps she will perform some time.

JANET

What do you mean?

GEOFFREY

Drape herself in cheese-cloth and do a bacchanale. (*Rising and throwing cushions on the couch.*)

JANET

If she had the inspiration she probably would.

CLAUDIA

Don't be afraid of me, Mr. Wareham. I won't disgrace you. Though I can do a very beautiful bacchanale, can't I, Janet?

JANET

She is the personification of art, mother. I never met anyone with such understanding.

MRS. RODNEY

Isn't that lovely for you. I am so glad you have come to stay with us, Miss Kitts. From Janet's descriptions of you, I am sure you will fit into this household most charmingly, and I shall be so glad of your companionship in the daytime, when Janet and Geoffrey are at the studio.

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JANET

Oh, no, mother. Claudia is going to help me with my work. Do you know I can even think more clearly when Claudia is in the room. When one of my pupils has difficulty with a gesture or an intonation, and I cannot give quite the right correction, I will look at Claudia for a moment or two, and—presto!—I get the shade or the tone I want.

GEOFFREY

You had better go into partnership together.

JANET

We may.

GEOFFREY

Really! How charming!

JANET

Now look here, Geoffrey, I don't mind your being rude to me, because I am accustomed to it—but if you are going to set yourself against Claudia, I shall not allow her to stay here. We shall take rooms at some hotel.

GEOFFREY

Why not? Oliver is going, and he can take you down.

JANET

Let us go and tidy up for dinner, Claudia. Don't pay any attention to Geoffrey.

CLAUDIA

He is so unusual. He fascinates me.

GEOFFREY

I beg your pardon, Miss Kitts. I am not unusual. I am just unusually ill-treated.

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CLAUDIA

Oh, are you? I am so sorry.

GEOFFREY

I appreciate your sympathy, but I beg you not to be sorry for me.

JANET

Is dinner nearly ready, mother?

MRS. RODNEY (*rising*)

My gracious! I am forgetting everything. I must go and see that there is enough to eat. I know there is plenty of raw food, but since Geoffrey exploded at the cook for piling up the table, it is all I can do to make her cook enough.

JANET

Be sure you will find Geoffrey at the bottom of every trouble.

GEOFFREY

Dear old Mother Janet, I'll come with you and stroke the cook.

MRS. RODNEY

No you won't, Geoffrey. You will only stroke her the wrong way.

GEOFFREY

Well, I must go and find Oliver, and please, Mother Janet, tell Ethel about my dinner and Fuller's—won't you, and—

(They go out talking.)

JANET

Whatever you do, Claudia, don't let Geoffrey

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irritate you. Treat him as a joke. (*They both sit on the couch.*)

CLAUDIA

But he isn't a joke. He is one of the most serious people I ever met. I am fascinated by him. I wish I had taken lessons from him.

JANET

You don't regret that you came to me—do you?

CLAUDIA

Oh, no—no. I only mean that I should like him to teach me as well.

JANET

You have forgotten more than he ever knew. Besides you are the most intuitive person yet born. Geoffrey has no intuition.

CLAUDIA

Hasn't he? I wonder.

(*Re-enter Fuller.*)

FULLER

How do you do, Miss Rodney?

JANET

How do you do? I didn't know you were in the house.

FULLER

I have been getting ready for dinner.

JANET

Oh. You are dining with us. How nice. How are you getting along with your elocution?

FULLER

Very well, I think. I don't know what Ware-

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ham thinks, but I have a suspicion that he thinks I am rotten. He teaches a different method from yours, doesn't he?

JANET

Probably, though we are supposed to be teaching the same method. Have you met Miss Kitts?

FULLER

I haven't had that pleasure. (*He shakes hands with Claudia.*)

CLAUDIA

How do you do?

JANET

Miss Kitts is one of my pupils. My best pupil.

FULLER

Oh, yes.

(*Enter Oliver. He looks around as if seeking someone.*)

JANET

Do you want anything, Oliver?

OLIVER

I was looking for Mr. Wareham, Miss.

(*Re-enter Geoffrey. Fuller sits on the piano stool.*)

GEOFFREY

Yes, Oliver, and I have been looking for you, and ringing bells for you. Where have you been? Why haven't you moved out of your room?

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OLIVER

I didn't know you wanted me to, sir.

GEOFFREY

I told you to.

OLIVER

You told me to go to a hotel, sir.

GEOFFREY

Yes. What for?

OLIVER

To go to sleep, you said, sir. I didn't feel sleepy.

GEOFFREY

Are you trying to be funny?

OLIVER

No, sir. I thought you was.

GEOFFREY

Well, I weren't. Talk grammar, and don't be insulting.

OLIVER

I didn't mean to be, sir. Was you serious?

GEOFFREY

"Were you"—not "was you"—

OLIVER

Yes, sir. "Were" you serious?

GEOFFREY

I am always serious.

CLAUDIA (*to Janet*)

What did I tell you?

OLIVER

You want me to turn out of my room and

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go to a hotel. I beg your pardon. I didn't understand.

GEOFFREY

Yes, please. And put all my immediate necessities in your room. Has Oliver made you comfortable, Fuller?

FULLER

Yes, thank you. I hate all the trouble I am causing.

GEOFFREY

Don't be absurd. All right, Oliver.

OLIVER

Yes, sir. (*He goes out.*)

JANET

Is Mr. Fuller visiting us?

GEOFFREY

Yes. He has come to stay. Have you any objections?

JANET

Of course not. I wonder you didn't tell me, though.

GEOFFREY

I only invited him yesterday.

JANET

You did? Oh. Well, I hope you will be comfortable, Mr. Fuller. Claudia, shall I take you upstairs, and show you your room?

CLAUDIA

Thank you.

(*Janet and Claudia move towards the door.*)

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Janet goes out. Claudia lingers for a moment and casts longing eyes at Geoffrey and then departs.)

GEOFFREY

What an objectionable young woman! Whatever you do, don't worry about Janet, Fuller. Treat her as I do—as a joke.

FULLER

Is she a joke? I think she's charming. I am sorry she doesn't approve of me.

GEOFFREY

She would if you weren't a friend of mine.

FULLER

Why, doesn't she like your friends? She's a good friend of yours, isn't she?

GEOFFREY

Can you be the good friend of a woman?

FULLER

You must be, or you wouldn't live at her mother's house.

GEOFFREY

If I have to be intimate with people, I prefer to live in their house. I hate calling. However much I care for a person, my affection leaves me if I have to put on my overcoat and muffler at midnight and walk the cold streets to the nearest subway station.

FULLER

Then you make conveniences of your friends.

GEOFFREY

Doesn't everyone? And if you don't make a convenience of a woman she will make one of

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you; and she isn't happy unless it is one way or the other.

FULLER

Oh, surely not, if she is your friend.

GEOFFREY

She never is. She is either your enemy or your lover.

FULLER

And which is Miss Rodney?

GEOFFREY

Oh, she's both; but then she's a brilliant girl.

FULLER

That's an amazing combination—"enemy and lover!"

GEOFFREY

Amazing, but not really so *very* rare amongst the over-cultured. It is quite baffling to have to choose between two equally interesting lines of action. The usual result in people of temperament is that they don't get any action at all. They become "Exocoetus Volitantes."

FULLER

Good Lord! What's that?

GEOFFREY

Aquatic term for flying fish. Have you ever seen flying fish in the tropics?

FULLER

I regret to say that I have never been in the tropics. That's one of the things that are wrong with me. A man is never fully awake until he has crossed the equator.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Oh, well, now that I have adopted you I'll take you on a Southern trip and show you the flying fish. They are so pathetic, Fuller. When all is said and done, what figure can you imagine more pathetic than a fish trying to fly? And they are *so* unsuccessful! They dart out of the water with such brave ambition, and flop back again with such a crushing sense of amphibiousness.

FULLER

Er—pardon me, but are you suggesting that Miss Rodney is a flying fish?

GEOFFREY

Why, no! Janet is able to be fish or fly according as it suits her mood. Applying the simile to what we were discussing, she can be enemy or lover. Just at present she is entirely enemy, as you have doubtless observed.

FULLER

Am I to gather that she has ever been entirely lover?

GEOFFREY

Doesn't that depend upon the definition of "Entirety"? But in case you have a morbid curiosity, Fuller, I don't mind saying that my definition of entire love is a state of mind at which two people arrive simultaneously for the purpose of not annoying each other.

(Re-enter Mrs. Rodney with a cocktail shaker.)

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY

Who is the best cocktail shaker?

GEOFFREY

The one with the best memory, Mother Janet.

MRS. RODNEY

Well, that isn't you. You can't remember a thing. He can't remember if you come from Oregon or Ohio, Mr. Fuller.

FULLER

I don't. I'm from Ontario.

GEOFFREY

Well, what does it matter where you come from as long as you don't show it? I don't wish to remember anything. You wouldn't, if you had my disappointments. Every night I pray for forgetfulness, and each morning I awake with some horrible memory.

MRS. RODNEY

Mr. Fuller, Geoffrey is getting into one of his morose moods. Soon he will cry on your shoulder. To avoid that you had better come and shake a cocktail for him. That will make him laugh, and possibly dance. He is more temperamental than a Pekingese.

GEOFFREY

Mother Janet, are you serious?

MRS. RODNEY

Never about you, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY

No, no. I mean about the cocktails.

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY

Why, of course I am. Today the most refined bootlegger called. He was collecting for a Charity, and incidentally selling a high grade of gin. The gin was hidden in the heart of that Charity more subtly than perfume in a rose.

FULLER

My hand never trembled, nor did my arm shake, with more genuine emotion, than they will in your service, Mrs. Rodney. (*He takes the cocktail shaker from Mrs. Rodney.*)

GEOFFREY (*going to Fuller and shaking his hand*)

Oh! Oh! What a splendidly phrased sentence! You couldn't have done that under Janet's tuition. What a useful chap you are, Fuller!

(*Janet comes downstairs and into the room during the next two speeches.*)

GEOFFREY

My intuition is remarkable! I knew that you would be a success; but I didn't dream that you would prove your value so quickly. How rapidly you adapt yourself to circumstances! How nimbly you spring into the gap!

MRS. RODNEY

Geoffrey is starting to elocute. We had better cut him short, Mr. Fuller.

(*Fuller and Mrs. Rodney go out together.*)

JANET

Exactly. Just elocuting!

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Oh, hello, Janet!

JANET

Geoffrey, would you mind telling me who this person is?

GEOFFREY

There are times when I feel it my duty to murder you, Janet, and never more clearly than when you call any one a "person."

JANET

It seems quite a rational term to use. Quite non-committal.

GEOFFREY

As you use it, it contains concentrated essence of contempt.

JANET

You mistake me if you think I feel that for Mr. Fuller.

GEOFFREY

Then why call him a "person?"

JANET

I apologize. This man—this friend of yours—will that do? Who is he?

GEOFFREY

His name is Fuller. He comes from Oregon or Ohio, or somewhere. Oh, no; from—from Ontario; and he is no relation to the Fuller's Earth people, and—

JANET

Geoffrey, when you try to be witty I want to cry. Why have you brought him here?

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

For companionship. He is my affinity.

JANET

Your affinity?

GEOFFREY

Any objections?

JANET

I never heard such nonsense.

GEOFFREY

Are you the only person who is allowed an affinity? Isn't Miss Kitts your affinity?

JANET

I don't know what you are talking about.

GEOFFREY

You distinctly said in this very room the other evening that she was your affinity.

JANET

I don't recall ever using the word, but if in talking of Claudia's marvellous mental, moral, and spiritual qualities I used that word I did so in the very vaguest manner. I don't even know the exact meaning of "affinity"!

GEOFFREY

One moment (*producing the dictionary*). "A chemical attraction which takes place at an insensible distance between particles of bodies and unites them to form chemical compounds."

JANET

Oh, I see (*rising*). You are trying to ridicule me. It is just another of your insults.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

May I ask why you should think that your affinity is any more genuine than mine?

JANET

Genuine? But you don't know this man.

GEOFFREY

I know him as well as you know Miss Kitts. I have taught him elocution for three months.

JANET

He was my pupil first, and he had no talent—so I handed him over to you.

GEOFFREY

And I have accomplished what you never could have—because you are so impatient—so intolerant.

JANET

What have you accomplished? Have you made him an orator?

GEOFFREY

Yes, by Jove! He phrased a wonderful sentence just now—he said—

JANET

I don't care what he said, I want to know about this "affinity" business.

GEOFFREY

I am very hungry and fatigued, and I don't intend to explain or argue. (*He flings himself on the couch.*)

JANET

Well, all I can say is—it's most peculiar!

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

What is?

JANET

Your bringing this absolutely strange man to live in our house.

GEOFFREY

Are you afraid of being compromised?

JANET

No, but I am not keen about being the center of ridicule. Are you going to tell everyone that he is your affinity?

GEOFFREY

I am liable to. Are you going to tell everyone that Miss Kitts is yours?

JANET

Certainly not!

GEOFFREY

Then you shouldn't have told me. It has annoyed me—irritated me—in fact it very nearly exasperated me.

JANET

But I don't remember saying it, I tell you. Anyway, surely I may place my confidence in a girl friend if I choose.

GEOFFREY

I see—and I must place my confidence only in you, so that you can share it with your affinity.

JANET

What a miserable opinion you have of me.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

I have no opinions on anything. Things change too quickly. (*He sprawls on the couch.*)

(*In exasperation Janet goes toward the door, then she changes her mind and comes back to the end of the couch near him.*)

JANET

But have you no regard for my feelings? Have you forgotten that we are engaged to be married?

GEOFFREY

No. But it surprises me that you have not. I made that very remark to your mother about you—only this evening.

JANET

And what did she say?

GEOFFREY

I don't remember. I think it was in the middle of a long speech I made to her, and I didn't give her time to reply, because I had so much to say. But I felt her sympathy.

JANET

Well, if you are going to do eccentric things like this, I think we had better consider our engagement as terminated.

GEOFFREY

Just as you wish.

JANET (*removes her ring and slams it down on the edge of the table behind the couch*)

Here is your ring. And of course it will not now be decorous for us to live together under this roof.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

What is wrong with the roof?

JANET

Oh, I am not joking with you.

GEOFFREY

Aren't you? I bring home a friend, and you return your engagement ring, and tell me the roof isn't safe. That sounds like a joke to me. You have brought home Miss Kitts, haven't you?

JANET

Yes.

GEOFFREY

Well, suppose I were to return the scarf-pin you gave me and say that the drainage was out of order. Wouldn't you think I was joking?

JANET

You do love to ridicule me, don't you?

GEOFFREY

Not at all. I am trying to get the point of your remark about the roof.

JANET

It is so easy to be dense when it suits your purpose. My point is that either you or I will have to leave this house.

(Geoffrey rises and faces her.)

GEOFFREY

But we pay the rent together, and we own Mother Janet between us. How are we going to split her?

MARCH HARES

JANET

Mother will stay with me.

GEOFFREY

Here?

JANET

Unless you refuse to move, which, to say the least, would be ungentlemanly of you.

GEOFFREY

Ungentlemanly! How typical! How many crimes men have committed for women for fear of being thought ungentlemanly!

JANET

I am not going to talk any more nonsense. Your future actions I leave to your sense of honor; but I think you had better leave the house very soon.

GEOFFREY

Certainly. Now that I know the roof is not safe and the drain is out of order it doesn't appeal to me at all.

(Enter Claudia. She comes behind the couch between them.)

CLAUDIA

Oh, I just adore this house. There is something magical in the air of it. It must be because everyone has such beautiful thoughts here.

GEOFFREY *(sits on a chair near the piano)*

My thoughts at present are disgusting.

MARCH HARES

JANET

Have you had wonderful thoughts since you arrived, Claudia?

CLAUDIA

Have I? Why, all my bad thoughts have gone. I am just thinking peace, and contentment, and—and love.

GEOFFREY

Oh!

CLAUDIA (*backing from him towards Janet*)

Mr. Wareham doesn't believe me. He doesn't like me, Janet.

JANET

There is only one person he does like, Claudia.

CLAUDIA

Of course, dear—you.

JANET

No. Himself.

GEOFFREY

Quite uncalled for.

CLAUDIA

But the love I am thinking is so impersonal, Mr. Wareham, so free from everything carnal.

GEOFFREY

That is a line from one of Janet's exercises.

JANET

If Claudia has experienced the true meaning of it, what does it matter if it is from a French grammar?

GEOFFREY

I am amazed that Miss Kitts knows even the

MARCH HARES

meaning of the word "carnal"—and I consider that the conversation is becoming indecent. (*He stalks out of the room.*)

CLAUDIA (*following him up to the door, and looking after him.*)

Now, what other man in the world would take such a clean view of things? He *is* serious, isn't he? And a little old-fashioned, which is always attractive.

JANET

Oh, please don't discuss Geoffrey. You have such understanding. How could you have expressed a sentiment so absolutely akin to my very deepest experience unless you were truly at one with me in thought?

CLAUDIA

To which sentiment are you referring, Janet?

JANET

Your sense of a love which is free from everything carnal.

CLAUDIA

Yes, wouldn't it be nice?

JANET

Nice! Why, my dear, you said that you were experiencing it.

CLAUDIA

I said I felt it in the air of this house. And yet I feel as if I were on the edge of a volcano. As if the air were very clear, too clear to last—and as if deadly fumes would soon issue from the crater and asphyxiate me.

MARCH HARES

JANET

What extraordinary talk!

CLAUDIA

Have you ever imagined how an athlete feels before a terrific test of endurance?

JANET

I don't know that I have.

CLAUDIA

You have seen them, haven't you—trim, and agile, with bare heads, and practically nude?

JANET

Claudia!

CLAUDIA

And you have known the training they have been through—the long strenuous tests which they have endured in order to be in the pink of perfection?

JANET

The pink of perfection—Yes—I suppose so.

CLAUDIA

When you saw them come out on the track, couldn't you imagine the mixture of nervous tension and healthy exhilaration they were experiencing? And then the start—the agonizing event itself—the interminable seconds or minutes before they reach the tape—and then the absolute exhaustion, as they throw themselves into somebody's arms—and someone else puts their coats on for them, and leads them to the pavilion for rest and relaxation.

MARCH HARES

JANET

Why, Claudia, I never heard you talk like that before.

CLAUDIA

I often feel it—and I feel it tremendously in this house. (*She rises.*)

JANET

But it is quite different from your feelings of peace and contentment and love.

CLAUDIA

Oh—quite. But it is possible to feel all sorts of things in a very short time. (*She picks up a picture from the piano.*)

JANET

The distressing part of it is that I don't know that I quite follow you. And if so, it is the first time since we became confidential that we haven't been in absolute accord.

CLAUDIA (*who is now looking at Geoffrey's photograph*)

Janet, have you always been quite confidential with me?

JANET

Why, Claudia! Of course I have.

CLAUDIA

About everything?

JANET

You are beginning to doubt me! This is terrible! And I know who is the cause—no one but Geoffrey!

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

Why, what do you mean?

JANET

Geoffrey would upset any combination—destroy any confidence. (*She sits in a more removed chair.*)

CLAUDIA

Janet. (*Coming to her.*) Have you always been confidential with me about him?

JANET

What are you implying?

CLAUDIA

Isn't he—doesn't he—hasn't he—Oh! He's the most carnal man in the world, isn't he?

JANET

Claudia! What are you saying? Why, he's a high-minded elocutionist.

CLAUDIA

I wonder! Why did you become engaged?

JANET

Well, neither Geoffrey nor I wanted to be engaged to anyone else, so there didn't seem any reason why we shouldn't be engaged to each other.

CLAUDIA

What a peculiar arrangement. But aren't you affectionate to each other?

JANET

What do you mean?

CLAUDIA

Doesn't he ever make love to you—kiss you?

MARCH HARES

JANET (*with slight disappointment*)

No. And, anyway, I wouldn't tolerate it.

CLAUDIA

But with his capacity for love, I don't see how you can resist him.

JANET

How do you know his capacity for love?

CLAUDIA

I can sense it.

JANET

Oh!

CLAUDIA (*sitting*)

You must have a hard fight, Janet.

JANET

You are making me very self-conscious, Claudia. Please let us drop the conversation.

(*Ethel enters and sets a small table in front of the couch.*)

JANET

What is that for, Ethel?

ETHEL

For Geoffrey's dinner, Miss.

JANET

"Geoffrey's?"

ETHEL

Oh, I beg pardon, Miss—I meant—Mr. Wareham.

JANET

Then why did you say "Geoffrey"?

MARCH HARES

ETHEL

I don't know, Miss. Just a slip of the tongue, I guess. Perhaps because I am so accustomed to hearing you call him that.

JANET

Don't forget yourself again, please.

ETHEL

I'm not forgetting myself, Miss. Anyone's liable to make a mistake.

JANET

What do you mean by that table being for Mr. Wareham's dinner?

ETHEL

He's dining in here with the gentleman.

JANET

Indeed!

ETHEL

Yes, Miss.

(Ethel retires towards the door. Geoffrey and Fuller return. Fuller is carrying a tray with cocktails.)

GEOFFREY

Hello, everybody! Cocktails? Cocktails?

(Fuller and Geoffrey both have a little jag. Fuller hands a cocktail from the tray to Janet.)

JANET

No, thank you.

(Geoffrey in his shortsightedness looks towards the door and encounters Ethel, who is gazing at him fascinated.)

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Come on, everybody. Where's Mother Janet?
(*To Ethel*) Well—Well—What do you want?

(*Ethel retires, crushed. Mrs. Rodney enters.*)

GEOFFREY

Ah! Dear Mother Janet! You must have a cocktail.

MRS. RODNEY

Not for me, thank you. I daren't upset my equilibrium for a moment. What would the house be like if *I* became temperamental?

GEOFFREY

You are no sport. Fuller and I have a jag already. We've been sampling. Where's Janet? Oh, there you are. Come on, now. I'll propose a toast. Miss Kitts, have you your glass? That's right. Now. Here's to—here's to our affinities!

(*They raise their glasses to drink. Janet snatches Claudia's glass, and replaces it on the tray.*)

GEOFFREY

Oh, how typical of you, Janet! Miss Kitts, have Mother Janet's glass.

JANET

Claudia, I forbid you! Let us go to dinner.

(*Janet sails towards the dining room door. As her back is turned Claudia reaches across the couch for Geoffrey's glass, to take a sip from it. Janet turns and catches her.*)

MARCH HARES

JANET

Claudia!

(Claudia checks herself with mock shame, and Janet sails on out of the room.)

GEOFFREY

Just like Janet!

MRS. RODNEY

Now, Geoffrey, you have started another rum-pus.

GEOFFREY

Well, Mother Janet, I'm always ready for the fray.

MRS. RODNEY

Will you come to dinner, Miss Kitts?

CLAUDIA

I must have just one sip.

(Mrs. Rodney winks at her and goes out. Claudia comes up to Geoffrey, and takes a sip out of his glass.)

GEOFFREY

Oh, you little devil!

(Claudia drains the glass. Geoffrey looks at it ruefully and says "Thank you.")

CLAUDIA

You are in a better mood, now, aren't you?

FULLER

Everyone is after a few cocktails.

CLAUDIA

Nasty thing to have dinner in here.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Come and have dinner with us.

CLAUDIA

I daren't. Good-bye. See you later.

(She runs out towards the dining room.)

GEOFFREY

I suppose she will marry some day.

FULLER

Very soon, I hope.

GEOFFREY

Why hope?

FULLER

Because I am sorry for the man who gets her after she has taken many more sips.

GEOFFREY

How cryptic you are. I am so glad I don't understand you.

FULLER

Aren't you conscious of the effect you have upon people?

GEOFFREY

You'll never make me believe that I have an effect upon that girl.

FULLER

Of course you have. Upon everybody.

(Enter Ethel.)

GEOFFREY

Bad or good effect?

MARCH HARES

FULLER

That depends upon whether the person is good or bad.

(Ethel places the plate of olives on the table. As she does so her hand trembles violently and she nearly spills the olives.)

GEOFFREY

Ethel, what the dickens are you doing?

ETHEL

I beg your pardon, sir. *(She pulls herself together, and goes with a very embarrassed manner. At the door she turns to look at Geoffrey, and with a glance she wilts and fades out of the room.)*

FULLER

Did you see that?

GEOFFREY

What?

FULLER

The way that girl's hand shook?

GEOFFREY

Of course I did. She nearly spilled the olives all over me.

FULLER

She should marry.

GEOFFREY

She is going to—next Tuesday, a Mr. Brown who was a sergeant in the army.

FULLER

Mr. Brown is lucky.

GEOFFREY

Look here, what are you talking about?

MARCH HARES

FULLER

I'll bet you have ruined more people than the average fifty men.

GEOFFREY

I have never ruined anything. I am the least destructive man in the world.

FULLER

You destroy with a glance.

GEOFFREY

How can you say such a thing? Now you have upset me, and all the effect of the cocktails has gone. (*He rises.*) People all try to destroy me. I don't destroy even an old hat. (*He becomes quite agitated and walks about.*)

FULLER

Forgive me.

GEOFFREY

How inconsiderate of you, Fuller—and most un-affinity-like.

FULLER

You don't mean to do it. I'll grant you that.

GEOFFREY (*calming down a little, and sitting again*)

But what a dreadful fate! To destroy without knowing it. It's like being a—a bomb—or a—a steam-roller.

(*Enter Oliver with soup, which he places before Fuller and Geoffrey.*)

GEOFFREY

Oliver, why are you waiting on us?

OLIVER

Ethel asked me to, sir. She didn't feel well.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Didn't feel well?

OLIVER

No, sir.

GEOFFREY

But she was in here a minute ago.

OLIVER

Yes, sir. When she come out she was trembling all over, so I told her she had better go to bed.

GEOFFREY

You told her!

OLIVER

Yes, sir. I think I know what is wrong with her. Salt, sir? (*Handing Fuller the salt.*)

GEOFFREY

Really. And might one ask your diagnosis?

OLIVER

My what, sir?

GEOFFREY

In your opinion, what is she suffering from?

OLIVER

Kind of ague, I think, sir; like Miss Janet gets sometimes.

(Geoffrey is astonished and drops an olive stone on Oliver's salver. Oliver accepts it with a "Thank you, sir" and retires. Fuller laughs. Geoffrey stares after Oliver for a moment, and then turns with a reproving glance at Fuller.)

GEOFFREY

Don't laugh! This is a conspiracy! That's the long and the short of it!

MARCH HARES

FULLER

A conspiracy? Against whom?

GEOFFREY

Against me. Haven't you noticed that Janet is working against me?

FULLER

No.

GEOFFREY

Well, she is. She is uncanny in her machinations. It's all dawning on me now. She is trying to oust me! (*He pronounces it "oost."*)

FULLER

Do you mean oust?

GEOFFREY

O-u-s-t.

FULLER

That's owst.

GEOFFREY

Why is it owst? Oost is more euphonious. Oost me—drop me—get rid of me—wring me out like a wet cloth, and throw me away! Am I teaching you or are you teaching me? Oost!

FULLER

Where did you get these wild ideas?

GEOFFREY

Don't be drawn into her schemes, Fuller. You are *my* friend. But believe me, I am rather afraid you are a bit involved already.

FULLER

I?

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Yes. Otherwise I cannot think why you should keep on telling me of my evil effect upon people.

FULLER

I didn't say "evil."

GEOFFREY

Yes you did. You said I destroyed with a glance. That's evil, surely. Janet is working to set the whole household against me. She is afraid that she isn't strong enough alone to oost me, so she is organizing a campaign to make me so self-conscious that I shall leave in sheer self-defense. She has influenced you, but you don't realize it.

FULLER

Oh, Wareham! What nonsense!

GEOFFREY

It isn't nonsense. But, listen to me! (*He rises.*) I am going to fight it! Do you hear? She isn't going to oost me! Here I am, and here I sit like the captain of a ship.

FULLER

Does a captain sit?

GEOFFREY

Don't quibble—Where was I?

FULLER

Sitting.

GEOFFREY

Oh, yes. Sitting. Like the captain of a ship, I shall be the last to leave. Do you know the motto under the Wareham crest?

MARCH HARES

FULLER

No.

GEOFFREY (*with a sudden mental aberration*)

Well, it is a most inspiring motto!

FULLER

I am sure it is!

(*Geoffrey grows most eloquent, and raises his tones with each magnificent period.*)

GEOFFREY

Yes. My father told me always to live up to it. I haven't done so, Fuller, and I am ashamed of myself. But from now on I am going to live up to it rigidly. My family motto is going to help me through this crisis. It is going to help me to frustrate Janet's schemes. Do you hear?

FULLER

Perfectly. What is your family motto?

GEOFFREY (*now becoming Rooseveltian*)

It's grand! It's glorious! It's inspiring, Fuller! It stimulates a man to action—to throw off his lethargy, and to take up the fight once more! We should never forget our family mottoes, Fuller! They were given to our ancestors for a purpose—generally by the King for some conspicuously brave act. And we, in this lax day and generation, are apt to forget even that we *have* a family motto! Never forget yours, Fuller!

FULLER

You bet I won't. But what is *your* motto, Wareham?

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Well, for the moment, the exact phraseology escapes me, but I can't help being positively thrilled by its sentiment.

FULLER

Which is?

GEOFFREY

Which is—one moment, I'll just speak to Mother Janet. (*He rises with his soup plate in his hand and goes to the door.*) Mother Janet!

MRS. RODNEY (*within*)

Yes, Geoffrey.

(*Geoffrey places his soup-plate on a chair by the door.*)

GEOFFREY

Would you mind coming here a moment?

(*Mrs. Rodney appears at the doorway.*)

MRS. RODNEY

Is anything wrong with your soup?

(*Geoffrey leads Mrs. Rodney towards the couch.*)

GEOFFREY

No, no, thank you, dear. But you remember I once told you my family motto.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, yes. Several times.

GEOFFREY

Can you recall it to your mind?

MRS. RODNEY

It's in Latin, Geoffrey.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Of course it is. All mottoes are—at least all the real ones. What is it—do you remember?

MRS. RODNEY

No. I don't.

GEOFFREY

Mother Janet, how could you forget anything as important as that? Why do you suppose I took the trouble to tell you?

MRS. RODNEY

It's on your ring, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY

Oh yes, to be sure, it is. (*He removes his ring and examines it.*) Can you read it? I am so short-sighted. (*He hands the ring to Mrs. Rodney.*)

MRS. RODNEY

No, dear. It's backwards.

GEOFFREY

Of course it is. How else would it come out frontwards when you use it? You are very little assistance, dear. Fuller, perhaps you can read it.

(*Fuller takes the ring.*)

FULLER (*reading*)

"Semper Otium Peto."

GEOFFREY

Ah! "Semper"—always, "otium"—ease, "peto"—I seek. "Always I seek ease"—"Always I"—Oh, no, that's wrong—that's quite

MARCH HARES

wrong. That isn't the motto I meant at all. Mother Janet, is this my ring?

MRS. RODNEY

Yes, dear. And that is the motto you have always quoted. Perhaps you have translated it wrong.

FULLER

That is the correct translation.

GEOFFREY

Well, there is a little mistake somewhere. The motto I meant is much shorter—just one word conveying an enormous volume of meaning. Ah! I remember—"Invictus!" That's it! "Invictus!" "Unconquered."

FULLER

But that isn't the Wareham motto.

GEOFFREY

Perhaps not, but it should be, and if I adopt it—then it is! "Invictus!" "Unconquered!"

MRS. RODNEY

Geoffrey, your soup must be cold!

GEOFFREY

Mother Janet, when I am drawing upon the spirit of the Crusaders by crying "Invictus—Unconquered!", how *can* you bring me back to this spineless age with a wail of "Cold soup"?

(Mrs. Rodney, with a gesture of hopelessness, starts to sit upon the chair where reposes Geoffrey's soup plate. A warning cry, "Look out!" from Geoffrey and Fuller startles her into a realization of her impending peril from which she is saved

MARCH HARES

by the entrance of Oliver, who rescues the soup plate just in time.)

OLIVER

Would you like some fresh, sir?

GEOFFREY

Would I like some fresh what?

OLIVER

Soup, sir?

GEOFFREY

"Soup, sir?" No, sir. Take it away. And, Oliver, you can serve our next course in the dining room.

OLIVER

Yes, sir.

(Oliver goes into the dining room with the soup plate.)

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, I am so glad. Now you can eat in comfort.

GEOFFREY

Don't misunderstand me, Mother Janet. I am not doing this merely to be sociable—but from a sense of expediency. Janet might possibly construe my action of dining in here with Fuller as meaning that I was afraid of her. So I am about to move into the dining room to take my place at the head of the table, with you at the foot, Fuller on my left, Miss Kitts on my right, and Janet—in either of the two vacant places.

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY

But, Geoffrey, we are not sitting like that. Janet is—

GEOFFREY

That pleases me still more. We will have a re-assortment immediately. As head of the house I have come to take my place. Fuller, please go in with Mother Janet. (*Fuller follows Mrs. Rodney into the dining room.*) “Semper otium peto!” Damn it, no! I mean “Invictus!” “Unconquered”—

(*Oliver returns.*)

GEOFFREY

Oliver, what's the meat?

OLIVER

Breast of veal, sir.

GEOFFREY

Breast of veal! How immodest! And how inconsiderate! Don't you know that it is my *bête noire*?

OLIVER

Does that mean you can't eat it, sir?

GEOFFREY

Can't eat it? I can't sit at the table with it. Who ordered it?

OLIVER

Miss Janet requested it, sir.

GEOFFREY

I might have guessed it. It's another of her schemes to oost me. She's trying to starve me out. Is your room ready for me?

MARCH HARES

OLIVER

Yes, sir.

GEOFFREY

Clean sheets, clean pajamas, and my bed-spread?

OLIVER

Yes, sir.

GEOFFREY

I shall retire. Bring me a cheese sandwich and a glass of milk.

OLIVER

No milk, sir.

GEOFFREY

Then bring me the cheese sandwich.

OLIVER

No cheese, sir.

GEOFFREY

Then bring me the two pieces of bread.

(And as Geoffrey stalks out into the hall the curtain abbreviates Oliver's amazement.)

MARCH HARES

ACT TWO

The same evening. About 11 p. m. Claudia is standing at the back, posing by a curtain, with a fan in one hand and a book in the other. Mrs. Rodney and Fuller are playing cards at a little table to the left of the stage, and Janet sits, disconsolate, upon the piano stool.

CLAUDIA (*coming down to the card table*)
What are you playing?

FULLER
I don't know.

CLAUDIA
Then how can you play it?

MRS. RODNEY
It's double Canfield.

CLAUDIA
Are you playing for love?

FULLER
Certainly not—A penny a point.

CLAUDIA
How thrilling. (*Crossing to Janet.*) Janet,
are you depressed?

JANET
Not at all—thank you.

CLAUDIA
Oh, yes you are. Let me read to you. I am
sure you would all like me to read, wouldn't
you? (*There is dead silence.*) Eh?

MARCH HARES

JANET

Why, of course, Claudia, what do you want to read?

CLAUDIA

Some of this marvellous free verse.

JANET

Who is it by?

CLAUDIA

It's anonymous. She calls herself the singer from Windsor.

(Claudia reads:)

Yestere'en, while rummaging
Through some antiquated trunk
I found a lamp, a queer, odd thing
Of brass, but green, and fly-spotted.
But I love it; yes, I love it;
And so I rub it gently,
For when softly smoothed
With something sheer and silken,
Straightway I start to fly—
To some South Sea verdant isle.
And there, ah, there, I see you;

(Fuller becomes interested and Claudia personal.)

You are sunbronzed, but I love you.
Now palpitating, expectant, I hide;
And watch you dive, and cleave the waters
sheen.

You dive and dive again, for pearls and things.
My sun-kissed affinity, your body cuts the air
Like an old-time Scimitar.

MARCH HARES

The water flashes up, caressing,
Against your naked limbs.

(Janet shifts uneasily at the indelicacy.)

Ah! You see me! You start!

You run to me with arms outstretched,
Glistening globules of iridescence
Held in each palm for me.

(Claudia emits a scream which brings everyone to startled attention.)

I scream, I scream with joy;
I shriek again. You stop. You stare;
Love pregnant in the eyes of you.
I tremble. You catch me; hold me
In your strong tanned arms;
And, pressing me to your breast,
You gibber—

(Claudia pronounces it with a hard "g", so Janet corrects her with a "jibber, dear.")

I beg your pardon, "Jibber"!
You jibber brokenly, and mouth strange sounds.
But I love it; yes, I love it;
I seem to rise, and touch the clouds,
White clouds, fat white clouds—
Such as German artists paint.
Ah, the dear, dear scent of you;
Perfumes of tropical Flora
Mixed with the ocean's tang,
And the odor of seaweed, and of

(Examining the text minutely and not without a little surprise)—fish.

MARCH HARES

But I love it; yes, I love it;
Now, now, your lips crush mine,
And I seem to rise again and thrill with rapture.

I sway; I swoon; I float;
And in ecstasy, I faint.

(Claudia falls on the couch in a simulated swoon. Fuller and Janet both rise in concern and go to her.)

JANET

Claudia, are you ill?

CLAUDIA

No, thank you, I'm quite all right. Did I read it well?

JANET

Oh yes, dear, perfectly. But I don't quite follow the sense. Do you?

CLAUDIA

Why yes—shall I read it again?

FULLER AND MRS. RODNEY (*in chorus*)

No!

JANET

Oh, no, don't bother; but it starts with something about a fly-spotted lamp, doesn't it?

CLAUDIA

Yes, you see, she smoothes it with something sheer and silken.

JANET

But how would that make her see a fat white cloud and a pearl-diving affinity?

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

Well, it just does. I get it, absolutely. (*And with finality she arranges herself on the couch.*)

JANET

Do you? Well—I've always thought you were a genius, Claudia.

FULLER

You've always thought me a nincompoop, Miss Rodney.

JANET

Nonsense, Mr. Fuller.

FULLER

I don't read peoples' faces so awfully well, but there was no mistaking your expression when I tried to spout Antony's oration.

JANET

I didn't know I had a special Antony expression.

FULLER

Wareham tells me that my passion for acting is out of all proportion to my ability for the stage.

MRS. RODNEY

Yes; he told me that too.

JANET

Mother! He was probably annoyed about something else when he said that.

MRS. RODNEY

I'm glad Mr. Fuller isn't good at it, because I can't stand actors as a class, and I want always to stand Mr. Fuller.

MARCH HARES

FULLER

Thank you, Mrs. Rodney.

JANET

Geoffrey tells me that you are progressing most favorably. In fact, he takes a lot of credit to himself for you. By the way, what is your profession, Mr. Fuller?

FULLER

Lounging.

JANET

Is that lucrative?

FULLER

Well, you see, it is more of an art than a profession, and art very seldom is lucrative.

JANET

But does lounging satisfy you?

FULLER

No. I can't say that it does. Still, I think it is more satisfactory to lounge well, than to work indifferently.

JANET

Have you ever tried work?

FULLER

Oh, yes. Many kinds. I have been a clerk, a salesman, a professional athlete—

CLAUDIA

Oh! Have you? (*See turns to Fuller.*)

FULLER

Why, yes. I have coached hockey teams, and one or two college crews.

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

How thrilling! To look at him, you wouldn't think Mr. Fuller was athletic, would you, Janet?

JANET

As a matter of fact I haven't looked at him. *(She hums a tune to herself and studies Geoffrey's photograph on the piano.)*

CLAUDIA

Oh, yes, I can see now that he is. But some men are more obviously physical than others, aren't they?

FULLER

I beg your pardon?

MRS. RODNEY

There! I have run out!

FULLER

You have? I haven't been paying proper attention. I'm stuck anyway. *(He counts his cards.)* Only eleven for me. Eleven from fifty-two leaves forty-one. I owe you forty-one cents.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, no. I couldn't take your money, Mr. Fuller.

FULLER

Why not? Isn't it good?

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, yes, yes. But I am sure lounging doesn't permit you to gamble.

MARCH HARES

FULLER

Lounging is all a gamble. Please don't embarrass me.

MRS. RODNEY

Besides, Geoffrey said—

FULLER

Yes—what did he say?

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, nothing—nothing.

FULLER

I insist that you accept my forty-one cents, Mrs. Rodney. Please do not humiliate me.

MRS. RODNEY

Very well. I'll put it in the Bide-a-wee Box.

JANET

I wish you wouldn't gamble, mother. You get so flustered when you win.

CLAUDIA

I should like to gamble and lose.

FULLER

Would you, Miss Kitts?

CLAUDIA

Yes. Do tell us more of your experiences.

FULLER

I lost forty-one cents telling you the others.

MRS. RODNEY

There! You see! He is casting it in my teeth already.

FULLER

I am not, I assure you. I will play you tomorrow night for a nickel a point, and win.

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

I'll play you any stakes—and win.

JANET

Claudia, dear. Don't be rash!

FULLER

Your advice is good, Miss Rodney. Miss Kitts don't be rash!

CLAUDIA

Tell us some more—please.

FULLER

Well, let me see. I was in a circus once.

CLAUDIA

Something thrilling—I'm sure—a trapeze artist—or an acrobat.

FULLER

No. Nothing as spectacular. I wasn't under the Big Top at all. I was in a side-show.

MRS. RODNEY

Not a freak?

FULLER

With the freaks, but not of them, Mrs. Rodney. I was a glass-blower.

CLAUDIA

What is that?

FULLER

Haven't you ever seen one? They make hat-pins, and ships, and odd-shaped pipes, and scarf-pins.

CLAUDIA

All out of glass?

MARCH HARES

FULLER

Yes.

CLAUDIA

And did you do that?

FULLER

I did.

JANET

Just why, Mr. Fuller?

FULLER

For adventure.

JANET

I imagine you do a lot of things for that reason.

FULLER

Nearly everything.

JANET

I thought so.

CLAUDIA

Is that why you came here, Mr. Fuller?

FULLER

Certainly. And you?

JANET

Of course not. Miss Kitts came here as my guest, Mr. Fuller. And doesn't it strike you that that was a peculiar remark?

FULLER

Which one, Miss Rodney?

JANET

That you came here for adventure.

FULLER

You practically accused me of doing that.

MARCH HARES

JANET

I didn't expect you to admit it so frankly.

FULLER

I hope I am always frank.

JANET

I think it's high time for us all to be frank.

MRS. RODNEY (*pouring oil*)

Janet. I am glad Mr. Fuller did come here for adventure. It is nice to think of the possibility of romance in our house.

JANET

But who is talking about romance, mother?

MRS. RODNEY

Well — romance — adventure — excitement — anything absorbing, I mean.

JANET

But who is there here, in whom Mr. Fuller could be absorbed?

MRS. RODNEY

Modesty forbids me to say. (*Fuller laughs.*) Very well. I don't mind admitting that I should just love Mr. Fuller to be absorbed in *me*. No one has been for years, and I think when you are all at the studio during the day-time Mr. Fuller and I could do a little mutual absorption which would be pleasant to both of us and injurious to neither.

JANET

Mother, did you have some cocktails after all?

MRS. RODNEY

Certainly not. I don't have to be tipsy to be attracted by Mr. Fuller's personality.

MARCH HARES

JANET

Personally I think this house has gone mad, and I think I shall retire.

CLAUDIA

Oh, don't go yet, please, Janet. It was bad enough when Mr. Wareham flung himself off—but if you go, we shall all have to go.

JANET

Well, if mother will behave herself I'll stay; but I cannot listen to my worthy parent disgracing her gray hairs.

MRS. RODNEY

Humiliated by my daughter for daring to be natural.

FULLER

Never mind, Mrs. Rodney. I am sure it must be tiresome to have to keep one's equilibrium all the time.

MRS. RODNEY

And to keep it amongst people who don't know what the word means.

JANET

I beg your pardon. I have perfect balance.

CLAUDIA

And so have I—unfortunately.

(Claudia walks to the card table and plays solitaire.)

FULLER

I have been trying to lose mine for years.

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY

You are all crazy. You are the most unbalanced collection of temperamentalists that ever breathed—and as for that poor future son-in-law of mine, at the moment dreaming feverishly on Oliver's couch—

CLAUDIA

What makes you believe that he is dreaming feverishly?

MRS. RODNEY

He dreams feverishly enough in the daytime. The thought of what his nightly dreams must be like brings tears to my eyes.

CLAUDIA

Perhaps when his brain is resting he has beautiful, peaceful dreams.

JANET

Don't worry about Geoffrey. He doesn't dream at all.

FULLER

You ought to know, Miss Rodney.

CLAUDIA (*in mock horror*)

Wha-at?

JANET

Why?

FULLER (*very flustered*)

I mean, I gather that you must hold his confidences.

JANET

You gather too much, Mr. Fuller. And my mother used that phrase inadvisedly.

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY

What do you mean, Janet?

JANET

I mean that you have no future son-in-law.

MRS. RODNEY

What? Good Heavens! You don't mean that he went upstairs to die! Janet! You frighten me! He did seem out of sorts this evening. Oh, I must go to him!

JANET

Calm yourself, mother. When Geoffrey goes anywhere to die he will announce it in the papers. And then he won't do it.

MRS. RODNEY

Then what do you mean by my not having a future son-in-law?

JANET

I mean that whatever future you planned has been overruled.

MRS. RODNEY

What is she talking about?

JANET

Merely that we mutually cancelled our engagement.

MRS. RODNEY

But why?

JANET

I don't feel inclined to discuss the matter now.

CLAUDIA

It wasn't on account of me, was it?

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY

How could it be on account of you?

CLAUDIA

I thought perhaps—I thought—

FULLER

Miss Kitts thought that—that—

JANET

Claudia thought that—

MRS. RODNEY

Well—what did Claudia think?

CLAUDIA

I'll tell you. I'm always bringing trouble to people. I was born in May and that's what May people do. They don't mean to, but they have to bring trouble, willy-nilly. And trouble comes to them, too—but they get out of it all right in the end. So, when I hear of anything terrible like this happening, I can't help feeling that I caused it. I've always noticed that when I go anywhere something like this happens.

MRS. RODNEY

I shouldn't go anywhere, if I were you.

CLAUDIA

One has to go to places, Mrs. Rodney. One must just be brave and bear this awful burden.

FULLER

I never knew that about May people before. Obviously the first thing to ask a person is what month they were born in. Rather novel,

MARCH HARES

don't you think? "How do you do, Miss Jones? Are you a May person?"

CLAUDIA

It's all very well for you to be funny. I think it's a tragedy.

JANET

Don't worry, Claudia. You had nothing to do with it.

CLAUDIA

What a relief!

MRS. RODNEY

Well, it's no relief to me. I think it is awful of you to break your engagement. I shall talk seriously to Geoffrey about it.

JANET

Please don't, mother. I can't see that it is a matter of great importance.

MRS. RODNEY

But you have been engaged for three years. It hasn't done you any harm.

JANET

Has it done us any good?

MRS. RODNEY

Well, it's interesting for me. It's quite amusing to hear you quarrel. If you are not engaged you will probably be coldly civil to each other. Think how dull that will make the evenings.

JANET

I'm sorry, but I couldn't be engaged to anybody just to amuse you, mother. Geoffrey will never be hard up for someone to quarrel with.

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY

Mr. Fuller, you can thank your lucky stars you are not the mother of a temperamental daughter.

JANET

I am not temperamental, mother.

MRS. RODNEY

Listen to her, and judge for yourself. I know it's her fault, too. And of course that is the reason, Mr. Fuller, why Geoffrey went to bed so early. He is probably crying his eyes out this very moment. I must go to him. I always have thought of Geoffrey as of my own flesh and blood. (*Stuffing her work into her bag and preparing to go.*)

JANET

Nonsense! You have only known him three years.

MRS. RODNEY

Three years to a woman of my age with a boy of his age is like thirty years to contemporaries. And I'm going to his bedside.

JANET

Well, of course, mother, you must be entering second childhood when you begin to talk about flesh and blood and bedsides.

MRS. RODNEY

I don't care. I shall forget my equilibrium, and burst into tears. I'll get temperamental.

FULLER

That's right, Mrs. Rodney. It would do you a lot of good.

MARCH HARES

JANET

Nonsense, mother, it would bring on your indigestion.

MRS. RODNEY

I don't have indigestion, Janet.

(Geoffrey appears in pajamas, bath-robe, and slippers. He is carrying a huge eiderdown.)

GEOFFREY

Would everyone mind clearing off the couch, please?

MRS. RODNEY

Why, Geoffrey! I was just coming to you, dear boy.

GEOFFREY

Were you, Mother Janet? How sweet of you. You see, I got your thought and saved you the trouble.

MRS. RODNEY

Are you very unhappy?

GEOFFREY

Not a bit. Merely uncomfortable.

MRS. RODNEY

Couldn't you sleep in Oliver's bed?

GEOFFREY

Yes, but not in his atmosphere. When a room has been closed for three years, and the walls forced to absorb the exhalations of someone addicted to steak and onions, and highly flavored chewing gum, the mere opening of one small window will not permit an individual,

MARCH HARES

not so addicted, to sleep calmly, and to dream of the open air and green fields. (*Removing his slippers he hands them to Claudia.*)

CLAUDIA

There! I knew his dreams were calm and beautiful.

GEOFFREY

They were not.

CLAUDIA

But they are as a rule, aren't they? (*Putting the eiderdown over his feet.*)

GEOFFREY

With me nothing is—"as a rule."

FULLER

Look here, old man, go to your own bed, and let me sleep here, please.

GEOFFREY

I shouldn't hear of it. I love this couch. I have slept on it many times in my clothes. Mother Janet has had many a fit upstairs, hearing my snores and thinking I was a burglar.

JANET

I was not aware that burglars snored.

GEOFFREY

Oh! But then you are aware of very little, aren't you? I have always longed to sleep here in perfect ease and negligé. I shall be asleep in a twink. Please continue your various occupations and eliminate me.

JANET

That won't be very difficult.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

In spite of Janet's insults, I shall sleep.

(Mrs. Rodney tucks him up.)

MRS. RODNEY

Will you be warm enough?

GEOFFREY

In spite of Janet's iciness, I shall be warm enough.

CLAUDIA

Are you sure we shall not disturb you?

GEOFFREY

There is only one of you who could, and she shall not.

JANET *(on the verge of hysterics)*

Good-night, mother.

MRS. RODNEY

Good-night, dear. Why, Janet, you are trembling from head to foot.

GEOFFREY

Oliver says she has the ague.

JANET

Please don't discuss me with Oliver!

GEOFFREY *(growing sleepy)*

He says he knows what is wrong with you—same thing as Ethel gets. He and Fuller know all about it.

JANET

How dare you!

(Janet flies out of the room, and upstairs.)

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY

Geoffrey, dear, why do you always upset Janet?

GEOFFREY

She said it wouldn't be difficult to eliminate me. ' Thought I would show her how easy it is to eliminate her.

MRS. RODNEY

Eliminate her, if you like, but don't drive her out of the room.

GEOFFREY

She is trying to drive me out of the house.

MRS. RODNEY

Why?

GEOFFREY

Ask her. She will invent a good reason. Anyway, it's time she went to bed.

CLAUDIA

I must go and comfort her. I know just how she feels.

FULLER

Do you?

CLAUDIA

Certainly I do. Poor girl, she doesn't deserve it.

MRS. RODNEY

Deserve what?

CLAUDIA

Such treatment.

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY

Why, my dear, you are trembling, too—like a leaf in the wind.

GEOFFREY (*drowsily*)

'Lot of rot. 'Sconspiracy to get me out 'f th' house.

CLAUDIA

Good-night, Mrs. Rodney. Good-night everybody. (*Bending over Geoffrey.*) I said "Good-night."

GEOFFREY

Goo' ni'.

FULLER

Good-night, Miss Kitts. Pleasant dreams.

CLAUDIA

You humorist. (*With a backward glance at Geoffrey, Claudia goes out of the room and upstairs.*)

MRS. RODNEY (*sotto voce*)

He's nearly asleep. We had better tip-toe away and leave him. You turn down the lights. I'll fix up the fire, so that no sparks can fly on to the carpet, or on to him.

GEOFFREY

If you would only shout, Mother Janet, it would be much easier to eliminate you. But that tactful whisper would wake the dead.

MRS. RODNEY

I'm sorry, Geoffrey.

(*Fuller switches off the lights.*)

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

And please leave the light on.

(Fuller switches them on again.)

MRS. RODNEY

But it will get into your eyes, dear.

GEOFFREY

Not if I ostrich.

MRS. RODNEY

If you what?

GEOFFREY *(throwing off the eiderdown)*

Oh—ostrich—ostrich!

MRS. RODNEY

Geoffrey, dear, don't call me names.

GEOFFREY *(lying prone, and spreading out his hands in despair)*

Don't you know what an ostrich does, dear?

MRS. RODNEY

Yes, dear; lays enormous eggs, but I don't expect that of you.

GEOFFREY

He also buries his head in the sand, doesn't he?

MRS. RODNEY

Yes, dear.

GEOFFREY

That's what I mean by "ostriching."

MRS. RODNEY

Now you must get your mind right off your work.

GEOFFREY

What are you talking about now?

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY

Aren't you quoting your exercises?

GEOFFREY

Sweetheart, your brain has evidently caved in under the strain of something or other. Don't you think you had better go to bed and rest yourself?

MRS. RODNEY

Well, if there's nothing I can do—but I'm so distressed about you and Janet. That's why my brain has caved in. *(She picks up his feet in the eiderdown and places them on the back of the couch to make sitting room for herself.)*

GEOFFREY

What have we done?

MRS. RODNEY

Broken your engagement.

GEOFFREY

Better to have had intentions and failed, than to have succeeded without intention.

MRS. RODNEY

Well, the more I say, the more you will elocute, I know—so I'll just say good-night. You can't elocute about that.

GEOFFREY

"As sweet repose and rest,
"Come to thine eyes, as that within my breast."

MRS. RODNEY *(replacing his feet)*

Oh, dear Heavens! Good-night! Good-night, Mr. Fuller. Don't let Geoffrey keep you from your sleep. *(She glances nervously at the fire.)*
I hope you won't burn up, Geoffrey.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

I suppose I shall—eventually.

MRS. RODNEY

Well, not before you really deserve it, I mean.
Good-night. (*She goes upstairs to bed.*)

FULLER

Do you really want the light left on?

GEOFFREY

Yes, please.

FULLER

All right. Well, I'll slip along.

GEOFFREY

No, no. I'm wide awake. (*He motions him to a chair by the couch.*) And I should be so much obliged if you would talk me to sleep.

FULLER

What shall I say?

GEOFFREY

Ask me questions. They always make me sleepy.

FULLER (*sitting*)

Very well. Why did you invite me?

GEOFFREY

Because I was furious at Janet.

FULLER

What about?

GEOFFREY

Because she was going to bring the Kitts girl here.

FULLER

Did you want me to carry off Miss Kitts?

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

I never thought of that. It's a brilliant idea, though. Do you think you could?

FULLER

I think anyone could, if he set his mind on it.

GEOFFREY

Well, we'll talk about that later. It was awfully nice of you to come here.

FULLER

I am always looking for adventure.

GEOFFREY

Oh. What does that mean?

FULLER

Look it up in Webster.

GEOFFREY

Oh, my God! The way people puzzle me!

FULLER

Why do men go to foreign countries?

GEOFFREY

Because they are sick of their own. Is that the right answer?

FULLER

There is another one.

GEOFFREY

Yes. Go on.

FULLER

Exploration.

GEOFFREY

Oh, yes. And what did you want to explore here.

MARCH HARES

FULLER

This foreign country in which you live.

GEOFFREY

It is like a foreign country, isn't it? I often think that myself. And I am like an Aborigine—or a Hottentot—or an Aztec—am I not?

FULLER

Quite like an Aztec—a remnant of an ancient and brilliant civilization.

GEOFFREY

I don't care about the "remnant" at all. I do feel "ancient." I know I am not "brilliant," and I find it impossible to be "civilized", so I feel that you couldn't have described me worse. But still, I am glad I appear odd to you, and I should like to be interesting. I wonder what you really are. Are you a gentleman at large, or have you some business? You aren't a detective, I know. No detective ever studied elocution.

FULLER

I told you. I am an explorer. I like the unusual. Your invitation was very unusual. You are so unusual yourself, that I felt sure your surroundings would be. They certainly are.

GEOFFREY

I see. And now you can go back and make notes about it all.

FULLER

I am making mental notes now.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

About me?

FULLER

Yes.

GEOFFREY

I am sure they would horrify me.

FULLER

I hardly think so.

GEOFFREY

You don't think I am insane, do you?

FULLER

No. You are the sanest man in the world. You strike a pose of insanity to cover your sensitiveness.

GEOFFREY

Yes. I am sensitive.

FULLER

By the way, did you give Mrs. Rodney the impression that I am in financial straits?

GEOFFREY

I—I—don't think—I don't know—Why?

FULLER

Because she didn't like to accept forty-one cents from me. She hinted that I must have a very small income—and she said that "you had told her"—but she wouldn't say what you had told.

GEOFFREY (*springing off the couch*)

I must straighten this out at once. I shall fetch her downstairs.

MARCH HARES

FULLER (*restraining him*)

No, no. Please.

GEOFFREY

But I must. Who cares if you are in financial straits, or have a small income? Isn't all of ours—yours?

FULLER

But I'm not in straits. I have a fairly good income.

GEOFFREY

I'm so glad, Fuller. I'm delighted. I wish I had.

FULLER

Why does she think I am in financial straits?

GEOFFREY

You are making me most uncomfortable. I can't pretend not to know. Mother Janet is a very dear but tiresome old lady. Why can't she mind her own business?

FULLER

After all, you know, I shouldn't draw you a check for two hundred dollars if I couldn't spare it, should I?

GEOFFREY

Two hundred dollars? Oh, my God! What have I done? Oh, what a fool I have been! What a silly idiot I am. Of course you lent me two hundred dollars to pay the rent last month, and I forgot it! Clean forgot it. And that is what you meant when you said that we were square. And we weren't square, because

MARCH HARES

my fees are only one hundred and fifty dollars, and I owed you two hundred. Oh, this is too awful! I can never survive it! I must write you a check at once! Where's Oliver?

FULLER

Oliver has gone to an hotel.

GEOFFREY

Well, I can't write a check without him. I must telephone to him to come and find my check-book.

FULLER

Now, please be calm!

GEOFFREY

Calm! Calm! I have committed murder. I've killed a friendship! I must telephone Oliver! Which hotel did he go to? I don't know! A cheap one, of course! Cheap but respectable. I must try them all. But I don't know Oliver's last name. He is always telling me, but I always forget. Oh, now I remember. My check book is at the studio. I got a new one yesterday. I'll go and dress, and we'll go down to the studio together.

FULLER

Please don't go to the studio. I've paid fifty dollars of the rent. That's a quarter of a month—call it a week. Just let me stay here a week.

GEOFFREY

What? Pay rent when I have invited you to stay here—Fuller, that's an insult!

MARCH HARES

FULLER

But it was because you owed me fifty dollars that I accepted your invitation.

GEOFFREY

Oh! Oh, the shame of it! A fifty-dollar affinity!

FULLER

What an amusing cuss you are!

GEOFFREY

How can I amuse you? You must be horrified at me. I can never look you in the face again. I must turn out the lights. (*Geoffrey switches off the lights.*) To-morrow I shall wear a bandage over my eyes. And now you must go. Your very presence is an accusation. (*He curls up on the sofa again, and begins to "ostrich."*)

FULLER

What remarkable dynamic force you have.

GEOFFREY

Please don't mock me. I feel very ill.

FULLER

I am not mocking you. I should like to calm you.

GEOFFREY

I have never been so roused—not even by Janet. It's a tragedy! We could have been friends, and I have killed a friendship. (*He grows drowsy again.*) I should like to die. Because ev'ryone rouses me so. I want to marry Janet but I hate rows, 'narguments. I know I shall

MARCH HARES

never find anyone calm. Someday somebody will rouse me once too often, and then ev'rything will finish, an' I shall jus' die. (*He trails off into unconsciousness, and ends up in a little rattle-like snore.*)

(*Fuller gives an amused and kindly chuckle. He looks at Geoffrey for a moment, and then shakes his head and leaves the room. You see him climbing the stairs. Then you hear him close his bedroom door. Shortly afterwards you see a filmy form fluttering down the staircase. A figure glides into the room, and in the light of the fire, you see that it is Claudia. She comes and kneels at Geoffrey's head, bends over and kisses his forehead. Geoffrey wakes with a start and springs up into a sitting posture. In doing this he upsets Claudia, and she falls flat on the floor, on her back and parallel to the couch.*)

GEOFFREY

Good gracious! What was that? (*He sneaks his foot from under the eiderdown and prepares to step from the couch. His foot encounters the soft recumbent Claudia.*) My God! A body! (*He springs back onto the couch.*) I dreamed I was murdering somebody! (*He switches on a light on the table at the back of the couch, and peers at the prostrate form of Claudia. She wriggles up and sits back on her heels.*) You! What are you doing there? Have you dropped something? How did you get there? I thought you went to bed hours ago. How long have I been asleep?

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

I couldn't bear to think of you down here—alone—and so unhappy.

GEOFFREY

What are you talking about? Look here, if you have been walking in your sleep you needn't feel bashful about it, and please don't pretend just to put me at my ease.

CLAUDIA

I couldn't pretend with you—Geoffrey!

GEOFFREY

Would you mind getting up?

CLAUDIA

Of course I will. (*She rises.*) Where may I sit?

GEOFFREY

Do you want to sit? I should go back to bed if I were you.

CLAUDIA

Oh, no. Don't send me away.

GEOFFREY

My dear girl, I didn't bring you here.

CLAUDIA

Oh, yes, you did.

GEOFFREY

There must be some mistake. Who told you I wanted to see you?

CLAUDIA

You did, in your dreams.

GEOFFREY

I dreamed I was murdering somebody.

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

You very nearly have.

GEOFFREY

Whom?

CLAUDIA

Me. I wish you would murder me.

GEOFFREY

Murder yourself, my girl.

CLAUDIA

Oh, you are so cruel. But you can't treat me as you do Janet. You *can't!* After all, I do understand you. (*She sits at his feet.*)

GEOFFREY

Oh, so you are in on the conspiracy, too.

CLAUDIA

What conspiracy?

GEOFFREY

To drive me out of the house. To oost me. But I am going to get my night's sleep whatever happens. You can all attack me in the morning. (*He curls up on the couch again.*)

CLAUDIA

Now you are joking, and it isn't fair of you to joke with me, because as a rule you are so serious.

GEOFFREY

I never was more serious in my life. Please go to bed.

CLAUDIA

You hate me! You hate me!

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

No, not absolutely. But I shall in a minute.

CLAUDIA

And after the way you have lured me on!

GEOFFREY

I beg your pardon?

CLAUDIA

After the way you have stared at me—gazed into my eye—fascinated me!

GEOFFREY

You must be inebriated. When have I stared at you—or gazed into your eye? I don't even remember what you look like in daylight.

CLAUDIA

At the studio—you have gazed at me, and you know it.

GEOFFREY

I never set eyes on you until tonight.

CLAUDIA

What about the key-hole?

GEOFFREY

The key-hole? The woman has gone mad!

CLAUDIA

Do you mean that you haven't gazed at me when I have looked at you through the key-hole? Why, your eye has been rivetted to mine.

GEOFFREY

Which key-hole?

CLAUDIA

The key-hole of your room at the studio.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

You are raving! How could I gaze at your eye through a key-hole? I am so shortsighted that I couldn't see the key-hole itself—much less an eye through it. And if I thought that you or anyone were gazing at me through a key-hole, I should have an attack of the horrors, and stuff up the key-hole with blotting paper.

CLAUDIA

What a bitter disappointment!

GEOFFREY

But *why* gaze at me through a key-hole?

CLAUDIA

It was the only place to see you from. I didn't dare come into your room.

GEOFFREY

Does Janet know of this?

CLAUDIA

No! No! She doesn't even suspect.

GEOFFREY

But I thought you were so confidential—you two.

CLAUDIA

We never confide in each other about you.

GEOFFREY

Well, if you told her that, she would drop you—I hope.

CLAUDIA

Of course she would. But it would be from jealousy—because she hasn't the pluck to peek

MARCH HARES

through a key-hole although she might be dying to.

GEOFFREY

Janet can look at me whenever she wants to quite normally.

CLAUDIA

Think what that means to me! Now you understand why I wanted to come to this house.

GEOFFREY (*horrified*)

To look at me?

CLAUDIA

Of course.

GEOFFREY

How awful! Well, couldn't you choose a more convenient time? You will catch your death of cold. That thing you have on is only barely adequate from any point of view.

CLAUDIA

Don't you like it? (*Holding out her skirts and pirouetting.*)

GEOFFREY

I can scarcely see it. I can see more of you.

CLAUDIA

Oh!—Geoffrey!

GEOFFREY

Miss Kitts! Don't get ecstatic!

CLAUDIA

Geoffrey! (*She flings herself at him with deviltry.*)

GEOFFREY

Yes, Miss Kitts.

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA (*in mock-passionate tones*)

Does my devotion mean nothing to you?

GEOFFREY

I don't know what it means! 'Pon my soul I don't!

CLAUDIA

I kissed you on the forehead just now. Is that to be the only caress I shall ever experience from you?

GEOFFREY (*sitting bolt upright*)

Wha-a-a-t?

CLAUDIA

I want you to kiss me—just once!

GEOFFREY

Will you go to bed if I do?

CLAUDIA

Yes—Yes—I'll—I'll try to.

GEOFFREY

Good. Come here. (*He draws her to him by her shoulder and kisses her lightly on the forehead.*) Bless you, my child. Now, be a good girl and run along.

(*Fanet enters. She is in a night-gown with a wrapper thrown over it. She sees the action of the kiss.*)

CLAUDIA (*sitting on the couch and wringing her hands*)

Oh—Geoffrey!

GEOFFREY

Now, no more exclamations. Run along!

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

Oh—what a little thing it is to you! It means nothing to you this devotion of mine. You just play with me, and fling me aside.

(Geoffrey gives her a little kick and she sprawls on the ground.)

JANET

Claudia!

GEOFFREY *(startled)*

Oh, my God! Janet! Now I shan't sleep at all! I know it!

CLAUDIA *(rising in feigned horror)*

Janet! What will you think of him!

GEOFFREY

Nothing to what I shall think of you!

JANET

Go upstairs, Claudia!

CLAUDIA

Yes—Yes—I'll go. But—please—don't be too hard on him—will you, Janet? *(She floats penitently up to Janet.)*

JANET

Please go upstairs!

CLAUDIA *(with the air of a chastened Magdalen)*

Yes, Janet. *(In mock shame she flits out of the room and upstairs.)*

JANET *(switching on the lights with a furious snap)*

How dare you!

GEOFFREY

How dare I what?

MARCH HARES

JANET

Oh! You cad! You cad!

GEOFFREY

Janet, I have had *too* much worry altogether! You must give me peace.

JANET

Who *could* worry you? I don't believe your conscience would prick you if you committed murder.

GEOFFREY

I shouldn't commit it unless I were justified.

JANET

And you are always justified in murdering a soul, I suppose, whenever you feel like it.

GEOFFREY

You must have been talking murder to Miss Kitts. Your conversations are similar. She just asked me to murder her. Before the night is up one of us will murder somebody unless we shut up about it. (*In genuine disgust he rises and searches the room for a cigarette.*)

JANET

Well, I shan't shut up—as you put it. I am going to have my final say to you, and then I am finished with you.

GEOFFREY

Then do go upstairs and put on some clothes. I am down here in my nightclothes for a legitimate reason—sleep—but if the whole household begins to wander around bare, the servants won't understand it.

MARCH HARES

JANET

I won't put on a stitch more to talk to you. I am perfectly decent and I don't care what the servants understand.

GEOFFREY

Well, if they leave, you will have to get some more.

JANET

Oh, Ethel will never leave! I don't blame any servant for leaving when she hears of your disgraceful behaviour. You have done enough, I should think.

GEOFFREY

What the dickens have *I* done?

JANET

Have you no sense of honor? I suppose you think because I interrupted you that you are exonerated from any guilt.

GEOFFREY (*lighting his cigarette*)

Interrupted what?

JANET

Oh, don't insult my intelligence!

GEOFFREY

As heaven is above I don't know what you mean.

JANET

Do you think it is big to destroy that girl's life and happiness?

GEOFFREY

Who? Miss Kitts? Destroy her life? Her lives, you mean. She has nine of them. She's a cat.

MARCH HARES

JANET

It's typical of you to abuse her, now that you have been disappointed.

GEOFFREY

Disappointed in what?

JANET

Och! You must think me an ignoramus!

GEOFFREY

I do.

JANET

But I will give you credit for being a rapid worker. I don't see how you managed to make the assignation, unless you did it before dinner when you gave her that cocktail.

GEOFFREY

What assignation?

JANET

For this interrupted tête-à-tête.

GEOFFREY (*kneeling at the end of the couch and staring into her face*)

Are you insulting me by hinting that I planned that thing?

JANET

I don't think I am insulting you.

GEOFFREY

My dear Janet, when I make an assignation it will not be a vulgar one with an insignificant little creature like Miss Kitts. It will have an air of romance, and will be with someone with an intelligence at least as great as yours.

MARCH HARES

JANET

Now you are trying to get round me by flattery! How infantile! And I am not flattered, because it is your capacity for intrigue which has always disgusted me.

GEOFFREY

Never in my life have I planned—tried to plan—or even thought of an intrigue—with you or anyone else. What ideas you do put into my head!

JANET

Your mind runs on intrigue. The very way you look at a person has intrigue in it. It is nauseating!

GEOFFREY

Oh, how absurd you are, Janet. You are just trying to rouse my anger. You have always tried to rouse some passion in me. You should take it for granted, and behave like a lady. (*He flings himself face down on the couch and chews the cushions.*)

JANET

Now you are trying to suggest that *I* am the carnal person! That *my* nature is the discordant note in our acquaintance. (*She feels she is making no impression upon the back of Geoffrey's head, so she turns him around by the shoulder.*) Listen to me! Claudia felt your malign fascination before she had been here ten minutes. She felt you impelling her directly she met you. Poor girl, she hadn't the strength of will to resist your advances. I shall never

MARCH HARES

forgive myself for bringing her here. But I did think you would have the decency to behave yourself.

GEOFFREY

Tell me, Janet—just for my own peace of mind—and to save me from going insane—*why* you persist in this tomfool theory about me.

JANET

It isn't a theory—it's a nasty fact—and you know it.

GEOFFREY

That I am a Don Juan—a seducer—a male vampire?

JANET

That your thoughts are always centered upon your fatal fascinations.

GEOFFREY (*rising, and picking up a pillow, which he hurls on the couch*)

What cruelty have I ever done to you that warrants such brutal treatment on your part? You *know* that all I ask is peace and contentment. And from some vicious motive—characteristic of a woman, and understood only by a woman—you are trying to drive me out of my mind. It is a favorite method employed by people to get their relations into asylums. (*He strides about dramatically.*) I suppose you want to have the elocution studio to yourself! I suppose you are just living for the day when you can scratch my name off the door! But you shan't do it! You shan't drive me insane! You shan't put me away! You shan't scratch my

MARCH HARES

name off the door! (*He takes a deck of cards from the card-table and bangs them onto the floor.*)

JANET

How diabolically clever of you to switch the blame to me!

(*Janet's practical instincts tell her to go on her knees and collect the cards.*)

GEOFFREY (*contemplating the kneeling figure*)

Janet, when I met you I liked you because you were different from the ordinary run of women. I thought you were a worker—a builder. Your mind did not run on frivolities and sex. But before I knew it you had started your subtle campaign to ruin me. You made me self-conscious. You even accused me of doing conspicuous things to attract women. You have piled up sex around us, as if the only important thing were that we fascinate each other. Why, we have become like a snake and a guinea-pig.

JANET (*rising in defense of herself*)

I'd have you know that I am not a snake; and I refuse to be a guinea-pig.

GEOFFREY

You are half snake, and half guinea-pig, and so am I.

JANET (*in exasperation dashing the cards on the floor*)

What nonsense!

(*Subconsciously annoyed by Janet's untidiness, Geoffrey drops to his knees and begins to gather up the cards.*)

MARCH HARES

Irritated by his lack of concentration upon the quarrel, Janet joins him on the floor and competes with him. Sometimes they make for the same card at once, and accidentally scratch each other's hands. Occasionally Janet will snatch a card from Geoffrey's hand, or vice versa. Their exasperation with each other is exemplified in the tussle over the cards, and it is heightened each time one worsts the other.)

GEOFFREY

It isn't nonsense, and please don't interrupt! You have made me artificial, blasé, decadent, and I hate myself for it. I don't hate you, because I can remember you as I first knew you. How can you let the evil in you speak to me all the time? Surely in the morning you will feel remorse that you have sunk so low as to accuse me of this childish thing—the seduction of a feather-brained, over-sexed little marionette!

JANET

I suppose you will say that she visited you of her own accord. That as my guest she abused the hospitality of my house. I suppose you will say that she is a bad girl.

GEOFFREY

No, I shan't, because you wouldn't believe it. If you had seen her plunge a knife into me, you would swear on the Bible that I committed suicide. She is a woman—and so are you—and you will stick together until the crack o' doom.

MARCH HARES

JANET

Then you mean that she *is* a bad girl; that *she* came to *you* of her own volition.

GEOFFREY

Catch her unawares, and ask her quickly. She might tell you the truth by accident. (*He has 30 of the 52 cards in his hand, and he flings them to the ceiling, whence they flutter broadcast over the room.*)

JANET

Well, anyway, I am glad you haven't deliberately passed the blame to her. You have some sense of honor left.

GEOFFREY

Not much—thanks to you—and I feel my temper going! So look out! I am beginning to tremble, and it isn't the sort of trembling that Oliver and Fuller say you get. I am probably going to do something desperate. You had better go, I think. Extreme fatigue, and the jabbering of stupid people are beginning to tell on me.

JANET

I'm not frightened!

GEOFFREY

You should be, because, I warn you, when I start I shall not do anything conventional. It will be something quite out of the way! I think I shall probably slap your face!

JANET

Huh!

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Yes, you may "huh," but don't forget that I warned you!

JANET

You wouldn't do that!

GEOFFREY

Oh, yes I would. It's one of the things I have been dreaming of lately—slapping your face—that, and murdering somebody—generally you. I know I shan't murder you—that would release your spirit for more damage elsewhere—but I am more than likely to slap your face!

JANET

If you decided to do that you would want an audience, and everyone is in bed.

GEOFFREY

You are the only audience I require.

JANET

I dare you!

(Geoffrey goes up to her and slaps her face. She stares at him—stunned—bewildered. He is a little surprised himself, but to make sure that he really is awake, and doing what he has dreamed so long, he slaps her once again. Janet stands staring at him with wide-open eyes. Then she sways, and falls into his arms in a dead faint. He looks around helplessly, and lays her on the couch. He becomes very agitated, and casts his eyes about for water or something with which to revive her. There is nothing.)

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Oh, Hell! Where's Oliver? (*Then he goes to the staircase and calls*) Mother Janet! Mother Janet!

MRS. RODNEY (*at the head of the stairs*)

Yes, Geoffrey?

GEOFFREY

Please come down at once.

MRS. RODNEY (*coming downstairs*)

What is the matter with you now?

GEOFFREY

Nothing is wrong with me—it's Janet.

MRS. RODNEY (*entering the room*)

What is wrong with her?

GEOFFREY

She came down for something or other, I forget what. We had a discussion, and I—I—I did something to her, and she fainted.

MRS. RODNEY

Where is she?

GEOFFREY (*pointing to the couch*)

There.

MRS. RODNEY

Geoffrey! Help me carry her upstairs!

GEOFFREY

But shouldn't she have some water or something? Some of your bootlegger friend's gin? Or, better, brandy?

MRS. RODNEY

I have some brandy upstairs. Please pick her up, Geoffrey.

MARCH HARES

(Fuller appears on the staircase in his pajamas and bath-robe.)

FULLER

Can I do anything to help you?

GEOFFREY

No thanks, old man. Janet has fainted, that's all.

FULLER

Let me carry her upstairs.

GEOFFREY *(lifting Janet)*

I can manage. *(Geoffrey totters slightly.)* Good Lord! my knees are giving way under me! I'm quite weak! Fuller, you had better take her—quickly!

(Fuller takes Janet from Geoffrey, and carries her upstairs, followed by Mrs. Rodney. Geoffrey grows a little dizzy and clutches the corner of the couch for support. He sways a little, passes his hand over his forehead, and then sits on the arm of the couch. He quickly regains himself, takes a cigarette, and lights it. He rises and stands in the center of the room for a moment, pensively; then a smile haunts the corners of his mouth and a rather surprised look comes into his eyes, and he says to himself:)

I never saw her in real repose before. She looked damned pretty.

(The impulse seizes him to play the piano, so he seats himself briskly and plays something quite brilliant. Then his glance falls upon Janet's

MARCH HARES

photograph. He rises and brings it to the piano and plays a ballad to it. While he is in this mood Fuller returns, regaling himself with a glass of water. Fuller comes to the piano and leans on it as he talks to Geoffrey, who continues playing the while.)

FULLER

Say, what do you suppose is the matter with Miss Rodney?

GEOFFREY

Just a faint, apparently. You never can tell. All sorts of things start with a faint. Perhaps she has caught some infectious disease.

FULLER

Well, I'll hand you the palm.

GEOFFREY

I knew you'd blame me.

FULLER

Do you still pretend that you don't realize your effect upon people?

GEOFFREY

I don't want to have any effect upon people. I don't try to have it, and I don't admit it! It's all bunk!

FULLER

Ethel, the housemaid has been pacing the floor over my head the whole night.

GEOFFREY

She's nervous about next Tuesday. It's an awful step she's taking that day.

MARCH HARES

FULLER

In the room on my left Miss Kitts is in delirium.

GEOFFREY

Is she raving about key-holes?

FULLER

No. She's raving about "Geoffrey."

GEOFFREY

I told her she would catch cold. She did, and now she has a fever. She came down here with nothing on.

FULLER

When?

GEOFFREY

Oh, tonight, sometime. I don't even know what the time is. It feels like next Wednesday.

FULLER

Then Miss Rodney passes out in the sitting room.

GEOFFREY

Just anger and annoyance because I told her the truth about herself.

FULLER

We are the two most unique people in the world. We should be photographed together.

GEOFFREY

Let's do it. Are we unique? How? Do tell me.

FULLER

The two shyest men with women. You, because you attract them so, and I, because I don't attract them at all.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Nonsense.

FULLER

It's a fact. Miss Kitts never gave me a tumble until I said I was athletic, and then she had to use her imagination.

GEOFFREY

Why did you tell her that?

FULLER

Quite innocently, I assure you. Then when she found that I was a glass-blower instead of an acrobat she lost all interest. So fleeting is any impression I make.

GEOFFREY

What are you talking about?—"glassblower?"

FULLER

I am just reminiscing. Miss Rodney detests me. She looks at me as if I were something in a tank. (*He stares at the glass of water as if it were an aquarium.*)

GEOFFREY

I have come to the conclusion that Janet is quite abnormal.

FULLER

Mrs. Rodney is the only one whom I attract, and I don't believe she would have ague over me.

GEOFFREY

Please don't try any experiments on her.

FULLER

Then Ethel could hand me all the olives in the world and never lose her balance.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

She's a dreadful waitress, anyway. I am glad she is going on Tuesday.

(Downstairs comes a procession consisting of Ethel, the cook, and Mrs. Rodney. Ethel and the cook are dressed for the street.)

MRS. RODNEY

Now, Ethel, you must be reasonable. You can't go like this.

ETHEL

Oh, yes I can, ma'am, and what's more, I must.

MRS. RODNEY

But think of the position you are leaving me in. Tomorrow's Sunday.

ETHEL

I wouldn't care if it were All Saints' Day, ma'am. The time has come for me to leave. I've got to think of next Tuesday.

(Geoffrey bangs out a wedding march.)

MRS. RODNEY

Geoffrey, Geoffrey, please! But just because there has been a little upset tonight, you can't leave like this.

ETHEL

It isn't the little upset tonight, ma'am. It's this house, and the general goings on here. I never was in such a place. If I was to tell Mr. Brown about it, he wouldn't marry me. He'd think I was loose myself.

GEOFFREY

Well, you are!

MARCH HARES

ETHEL

What's that, Mr. Wareham?

GEOFFREY

You don't call it very rigid to walk out on us like this, do you?

ETHEL

What has that got to do with looseness, Mr. Wareham? I'd like you to explain.

GEOFFREY

Would you? Well, you won't have the satisfaction.

ETHEL

Cook, you are a witness that Mr. Wareham insulted me.

(The cook looks sleepy and tired and silly. She blinks her fat eyes, but says no word.)

ETHEL

I should like Mr. Wareham to retract his words, Mrs. Rodney.

MRS. RODNEY

Geoffrey—dear.

GEOFFREY

Will you stay if I retract them?

ETHEL

No, I will not.

GEOFFREY

Then I do not retract. I reiterate. You are a loose woman! So loose that you rattle.

ETHEL

Oh, I'll have you up in court for that! And I'll

MARCH HARES

tell everything I know about you! I'll tell the games you have played on me!

GEOFFREY

Games! What games?

ETHEL

Knowing that I was going to be married, the way you have carried on with me—ogling and flirting with me!

GEOFFREY

Well, I'll be— There you are, Fuller! See? She's in on the conspiracy, too. She is trying to oost me! But I've beaten her! She's leaving—not I! (*To Ethel.*) You have wilted under the force of "Invictus."

ETHEL

Who's he?

GEOFFREY

He's my motto! Invictus!

ETHEL

Say that again!

GEOFFREY

With pleasure. Invictus! Invictus!

ETHEL

Swear at me in Italian if you like, but wait till I tell Mr. Brown about this. He was a sergeant in the Infantry, and he'll come up and clean out the whole lot of you!

MRS. RODNEY

Ethel—that is sufficient!

ETHEL

You said it—it's more than sufficient—come on, Cook.

MARCH HARES

(The cook has gone to sleep in a chair in the hall. Ethel drags her off and you hear the front door slam.)

MRS. RODNEY

Geoffrey, how can you treat people like this? You seem to take a delight in upsetting everyone. *(Coming over to the piano.)*

GEOFFREY

Aha, the last of the conspirators. You are against me, Mother Janet, and now the band is complete.

MRS. RODNEY

I am not against you, Geoffrey, but I do wish that you would be a little human.

GEOFFREY

I wasn't born to be human, don't cry, dear, dry your eyes and fox trot with Fuller. *(He strikes up a gay fox trot.)*

MRS. RODNEY

Dance, at this hour of the night in this attire! Well, there's an inhuman thing to say.

GEOFFREY

Fuller, trot Mother Janet round.

MRS. RODNEY

No, no, Mr. Fuller.

GEOFFREY

Be kind to him, Mother Janet, he thinks nobody loves him.

MRS. RODNEY

Don't be silly, Geoffrey, and don't play the piano. That's what finished everything.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Did it?

MRS. RODNEY

Yes, it brought Janet to—but it drove the servants out.

GEOFFREY

Well, it's an ill wind—I'm glad Janet is back to earth again. How is she?

MRS. RODNEY

Very sick. Miss Kitts is spraying her with eau de cologne.

GEOFFREY

I'm glad that Miss Kitts is doing something useful. Let's have more music. (*Plays again.*)

MRS. RODNEY

No, Geoffrey, no. The neighbors will complain.

GEOFFREY

Let 'em; let 'em move. We don't have to get new ones if they leave.

MRS. RODNEY

Stop, Geoffrey. Will you stop! (*Geoffrey eventually obeys her.*) Now, if you please, what did you do to Janet?

GEOFFREY

I won't tell you, Mother Janet, and she daren't. But I don't mind saying that it is something no man ever did to a woman before, at least no gentleman ever did it to a lady.

MRS. RODNEY

What can it be?

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

If she had done it to me, it would have been commonplace, and she would have boasted about it, but I did it to her and she daren't repeat it for the sake of her dignity. She pretended that I was such a brute. Well, I am. I showed her.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, well, of course I must go to her. This is what comes of humoring you so long. I should have whipped you both once a week and put you to bed on bread and water. But somehow I feel you have gone too far.

GEOFFREY

I have only just started. I can't tell to what lengths I shall go now.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, if I could get you back to Oliver's room I'd lock you in.

GEOFFREY

How unjust. When I am the only person you can trust! You go and lock up everyone else.

MRS. RODNEY

Mr. Fuller, I'll leave him to you. Make him go to bed and behave himself, though upon my soul I don't believe he could behave himself even in bed.

GEOFFREY

Mother Janet, that will do!

MRS. RODNEY

What?

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

That will do! Run along!

MRS. RODNEY

You horrid boy! You're inhuman, that's just what you are! (*She goes out crying.*)

GEOFFREY

Well, really! Fuller, hadn't you better get some sleep?

FULLER

How can I sleep when I am consumed with curiosity?

GEOFFREY

About me and Janet?

FULLER

Yes.

GEOFFREY

I should hate you to be consumed, so I'll tell you. Tonight for a moment, I was master of myself and of her. I was exultant and full of glory. Now, of course, I should be humble and ashamed, and I am, because in order to conquer her I have had to sacrifice my motto. She has oosted me and I must say good-bye to *Invictus*. But I have had my hour and I know now that—

FULLER

That you love her?

GEOFFREY

Of course I love her. I have always loved her, but you don't really love fireworks until they have exploded. Thank God, I have exploded

MARCH HARES

Janet, and have seen her blaze brilliantly in the sky for a few seconds, and now I can sit down. (*He seats himself at the piano.*) And from a distance I can love the wreck I have made of her. (*He begins to play a very romantic ditty, possibly "I Know a Lovely Garden."*) Oh, Fuller, I have always wanted to be miserable about somebody. I am going to be so miserable about Janet. It is going to be wonderful! I shall live in a wretched hall-bedroom on poor food, and enjoy agonies for Janet. (*Dreamily.*) Oh, Fuller, I am marvelously unhappy. Give me a cigarette.

(*Fuller puts a cigarette in his mouth and lights it for him, as the curtain abbreviates his playing.*)

MARCH HARES

ACT THREE

One p. m. the next day—Sunday. The curtains are still drawn across the windows. Only a faint glimmer of light percolates. Geoffrey is asleep, curled up under the eiderdown on the couch. Mrs. Rodney comes into the room, carrying a cup of steaming coffee. This she places under Geoffrey's nose. Geoffrey does not stir.

MRS. RODNEY

Coffee, Geoffrey? Geoffrey! Coffee! (*She places the cup on the floor by his head.*) (*To herself.*) Perhaps he will sniff it and wake. (*She draws open the curtains on one of the windows. This lets in a little light. Then she comes back to the head of the couch.*) Geoffrey! Sunday! Geoffrey! (*There is no reply.*) One o'clock! Sunday! Geoffrey!

(Not the slightest response, so she steals out of the room.

Oliver enters. He looks at Geoffrey. He thinks that the light may be too strong, so he draws the curtains across the window again. He sees the coffee on the ground, so he removes it, and places it on the table behind the couch. Then he goes out.

Fuller enters next. He comes up to the couch and looks at Geoffrey. He bends over him to see if he is really asleep.)

FULLER

Wareham, do you know what time it is? It is one o'clock, Sunday. (*He draws not a vestige of*

MARCH HARES

a reply from the sleeper. He considers a moment, and thinks he will let in a little light. Perhaps that will awake Geoffrey. He therefore opens both curtains on the same window. This lets in a flood of light. He notices the cup of coffee on the table. This gives him another idea, and he takes a chair and places the coffee on it under Geoffrey's nose.) Wareham! Some coffee? (Still no reply, so Fuller takes a book, sits in a chair, and begins to read.)

(Oliver now returns. He sees that the coffee has been replaced under Geoffrey's nose.)

OLIVER

He hates the smell of coffee first thing when he wakes. *(He replaces the coffee on the table. He then realizes the flood of light from the window.)* I closed them curtains.

(He goes up and closes them yet again. This makes it impossible for Fuller to read, so he closes the book.)

FULLER

I apologize. I did all for the best.

(Mrs. Rodney now returns.)

MRS. RODNEY

Isn't he awake yet?

(Oliver is carrying away the cup.)

MRS. RODNEY

Oliver, I brought Mr. Wareham that coffee. Leave it, please.

MARCH HARES

OLIVER

He'll be sick if he smells it.

MRS. RODNEY

Will he? Oh, well, take it away. And I opened the curtains. Who closed them again?

OLIVER

He'll swear if he sees the daylight.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, will he? Very well.

(Oliver goes out. Mrs. Rodney sits on one side of the couch.)

MRS. RODNEY *(whispering)*

Dear! Dear! You don't think he has sleeping sickness, do you?

FULLER *(on a chair the other side of the couch; whispering)*

I hardly think so. Just mental exhaustion.

(Geoffrey stirs.)

MRS. RODNEY

That did it?

(Geoffrey gradually awakes and wriggles out from under the eiderdown. He blinks his eyes. Peering round, he sees the solemn figure of Mrs. Rodney and Fuller seated in the gloom on either side of the couch.)

GEOFFREY

Lord! What is this? A wake? Am I dead?

MRS. RODNEY

No, dear, you're quite alive.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

That's a comfort. What time is it?

MRS. RODNEY

One o'clock.

GEOFFREY

One o'clock? Oh, it's time we all went to bed.

MRS. RODNEY

We have all been there, dear, and we're up again. It's Sunday. One o'clock—p. m.

GEOFFREY

I never know which that means. Does it mean afternoon?

MRS. RODNEY

Yes, dear.

GEOFFREY

Well, why the gloom? Hasn't anyone thought of letting in a little light?

(Fuller rises and lets in a little.)

GEOFFREY

That's better.

(Fuller draws all the curtains open.)

GEOFFREY

Getting better all the time. Who is that? Oliver?

FULLER

No. It's I.

GEOFFREY *(blinking)*

Who's I?

MRS. RODNEY

Mr. Fuller.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Oh, yes, Fuller, of course. Where's Oliver?
Why doesn't he bring me some coffee?

MRS. RODNEY

There! I was sure it wouldn't make you sick.
I'll fetch you some more.

GEOFFREY

Thank you, Mother Janet.

MRS. RODNEY (*coming to him and stroking his forehead*)

You will be good today, won't you?

GEOFFREY

Be good?

MRS. RODNEY

Yes, dear. A few more nights like last night,
and heaven alone knows what will happen to
us. We are really in the most dreadful muddle
with no servants, and only Oliver to cook the
dinner.

GEOFFREY (*holding his head in his hands*)

I can't remember anything. I feel as if I had
been in some unusual state for a very long
period.

MRS. RODNEY

Perhaps coffee will revive your memory. I
believe in coffee for everything. (*She goes out.*)

GEOFFREY

Can you help me out, Fuller? I hope I am
not suffering from one of those loss of memory
diseases—with a Greek name—you know—
Iphigenia, or Ammonia—or whatever they are

MARCH HARES

called. Honestly, I feel dead—or born again—or something. I am sure I haven't continued to live as before. Am I really talking to you? You seem very distant, and my voice sounds far away.

FULLER

You'll wake up soon.

GEOFFREY

I suppose so, but to what? Wait! Mother Janet mentioned the servants leaving. They left last night, didn't they? Why? Oh, because I played the piano. And why did I play the piano? Because I was greatly stirred over something or other. Oh, I know. I kissed somebody—slightly—who was it? Miss Kitts. Where is she?

FULLER

She has gone.

GEOFFREY

Gone! Where?

FULLER

Left the house about ten this morning. Just walked out without saying a word.

GEOFFREY

Oh.

(Mrs. Rodney returns.)

MRS. RODNEY

Here's the coffee, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY

Mother Janet, Fuller tells me that Miss Kitts has walked out of the house. Why?

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY.

Now don't worry, Geoffrey. It's a very good thing, because we are in no position to entertain. Oh, we don't mind you, Mr. Fuller. You are more like one of the family, and you know how to cook potatoes.

GEOFFREY

What nonsense! I can cook dinner. Leave it to me. And Janet is very practical.

MRS. RODNEY

She isn't at all practical today.

GEOFFREY

Why?

MRS. RODNEY

My dear—she's in bed—prostrate.

GEOFFREY

Oh, how low. What does she want to be that for?

MRS. RODNEY

Well, you ought to know. She won't open her mouth to us. What *did* happen last night?

GEOFFREY (*suddenly remembering*)

Oh, yes! (*Covering his face with his hands.*)
Now it all comes back to me. Of course, I must leave the house.

MRS. RODNEY

Leave the house? Why?

GEOFFREY

Because of the conspiracy. Don't pretend that you don't know, Mother Janet. I distinctly recall that you were in on it.

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY

What are you talking about?

GEOFFREY

The conspiracy to get me out of the house. Janet was scheming the whole evening, and finally she won.

MRS. RODNEY

How?

GEOFFREY

She made me do something so terrible that I could never look her in the face again. Of course, I see this last step! Very clever indeed. She has sent Miss Kitts out as a decoy, thinking that I shall go out and find her! And then, when I come back, the front door will be locked, and all the windows barred. Then she can have me arrested if I try to break in. Oh, how clever. You can't beat a woman! What lengths a woman will go to to gain her end! What tremendous lengths!

(Mrs. Rodney starts to sit on the couch, and incidentally on the coffee cup.)

GEOFFREY AND FULLER

Look out!

(Geoffrey rescues the cup.)

MRS. RODNEY

What is all this nonsense about a conspiracy?

GEOFFREY

It isn't nonsense. You understand it perfectly, I regret to say. And you were in on it.

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY

I won't stand it, Geoffrey! I can't stand it! How dare you suggest that I am scheming against you? I care almost as much for you as I do for Janet. And as for Miss Kitts, between you and me, and Mr. Fuller, I think she is a cheeky little minx! Now, I have said it! And I am glad she is gone if she tried to come between you and Janet. And I hope she won't come back again. It will give me great pleasure to send her pink nighty, and her hand-embroidered whatnots after her. And her Chinese boudoir slippers, which she places just inside the bedroom door, and then leaves the door open, for every man to see.

FULLER

Does she do all that?

MRS. RODNEY

Don't pretend you haven't seen them. I am glad she has gone. She doesn't understand temperamental people, and she doesn't want to. She is altogether too earthy. We don't want earthy people in the house. (*The door bell rings.*) Oh, dear! A caller! Geoffrey, you must get into clothes that won't make people think of bedrooms.

GEOFFREY

I am what I feel, and I feel bedroomy. And there is nothing reprehensible about my bedroom. (*He draws the eiderdown around his shoulders, and continues to sip his coffee.*)

(*Oliver admits Claudia.*)

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

Good morning, dear people!

MRS. RODNEY

Miss Kitts! We were just talking about you. Everybody thought you had left.

CLAUDIA

I hope I haven't disappointed you by returning.

MRS. RODNEY

Not at all. We were saying how we had missed you. Where have you been?

CLAUDIA

To church.

FULLER

To church?

CLAUDIA

Yes, and I am so much the better for it. What a poor selection of churches you have in this neighborhood. It took me nearly half an hour to find one which would really suit my mood. But my patience was rewarded, and I heard a magnificent sermon which has completely exhausted me. I wonder if I might have a cup of coffee.

FULLER

Are you really exhausted, Miss Kitts?

CLAUDIA

Absolutely. There is no danger left in me. I must be very careful, because I should be such an easy prey to any unscrupulous person.

MRS. RODNEY

You are quite safe, Miss Kitts. We have only our scruples left. The servants have gone.

MARCH HARES

FULLER

What was the text of your sermon?

CLAUDIA

Wonderful and thrilling! "Fishers of men."

MRS. RODNEY

I am sure you need coffee.

FULLER

I'll come and peel potatoes for you.

GEOFFREY

Fuller, I won't have you peeling potatoes. I shall come and cook the dinner with Oliver. Cooking brings an intimacy between Oliver and me, which we lack on every other subject.

MRS. RODNEY

If you will only dress yourself, I shan't have a nervous flutter when the door bell rings again.

GEOFFREY

Well, don't let Fuller cook. He is writing his impressions of this house, and I should hate to have him put that in the guise of an affinity, he was engaged as a cook.

(Mrs. Rodney goes out.)

FULLER

I shall say that in the guise of a loafer, I proved myself an honest man.

CLAUDIA

I should adore to meet an honest man.

FULLER

The net is no respecter of fish. It catches the honest with the dishonest. *(He goes out.)*

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

How symbolic Fuller is growing.

CLAUDIA

How tactful of them to leave us alone.

GEOFFREY

I am not conscious of any desire to be alone with you.

CLAUDIA

There! I was afraid I had offended you.

GEOFFREY

Not at all. No one has ever affected me less. But if you thought with Janet, that I was going to chase you until I found which church you had gone to, you made a miscalculation.

CLAUDIA

How like a man to misjudge a woman's motive! Can't I even go to church without being misunderstood?

GEOFFREY

If you choose a church where they are preaching about fishing for men you must expect to be misunderstood.

CLAUDIA

You are just peeved about last night. I am not a bit angry with you. I know how to take a back seat.

GEOFFREY

A back seat?

CLAUDIA

Yes. I was glad to do what I did for Janet.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

And what was that, pray?

CLAUDIA

Why, waking you up.

GEOFFREY

That may have appealed to you as an evening's entertainment, but it completely upset the household, because, as a consequence, I slept until a few minutes ago.

CLAUDIA

Oh, I am speaking metaphorically, and don't pretend that you don't know it.

GEOFFREY

I am the most direct person, and I loathe metaphor.

CLAUDIA

You are just a bear with a sore head, and you ought to be as grateful to me as Janet will be.

GEOFFREY

Grateful to you for turning me out of the house?

CLAUDIA

It is I who will have to leave.

GEOFFREY

You left once, but you came back.

CLAUDIA

Yes. Why?

GEOFFREY

For your lingerie, so Mother Janet thinks, but I know different. You came back because I didn't follow you.

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

You poor ignorant man! I left the house to prepare my mind, and the best place to do that is in a church. So I went to church. In the meantime I expected that you would have a talk with Janet, and I should be able to say, "Bless you, my children," and pack my things and go.

GEOFFREY

I don't believe a word of it. "Bless you, my children"—for what in heaven's name?

CLAUDIA

Oh, what has happened? Have you quarrelled today—you and Janet, I mean?

GEOFFREY

Why specify today? Wasn't last night the end of everything?

CLAUDIA

I thought it was the real beginning.

GEOFFREY

Oh, don't pretend that Janet did not confide in you while you were deluging her with eau de cologne.

CLAUDIA

She was incoherent. But my imagination is just as keen as the average person's, and I couldn't help knowing how you would treat her, after the way you treated me. Do you know, when you kissed me, I felt positively afraid for the next person who came along.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

As far as I can remember I gave you a little peck as a bribe for you to go to bed.

CLAUDIA

Yes; and in that peck I felt all your suppressed emotion, and I knew it must burst soon. But I never dreamed that it would burst over Janet.

GEOFFREY

I wish to heaven it had burst over you.

CLAUDIA

Oh, I have learned to do without happiness.

GEOFFREY

Happiness!

CLAUDIA

Yes, as long as I can make others happy. I am a May person!

GEOFFREY

I don't know what that means, but you have made me anything but happy. I am perfectly miserable, to tell the truth.

CLAUDIA

Oh, Geoffrey!

GEOFFREY

Now, please don't get ecstatic again!

CLAUDIA

Oh, Geoffrey!

GEOFFREY

Please don't exclaim like that. It is most irritating!

CLAUDIA

I feel like a mother to you.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Control yourself!

CLAUDIA

Or a very dear, dear sister.

GEOFFREY

You are as annoying as a whole family of cousins.

CLAUDIA

You don't mean that.

GEOFFREY

I assure you I do. And please remember that you are not at a key-hole at the moment, and you surely must know my face by this time.

CLAUDIA

I can never fully know your face.

GEOFFREY

Well, that's a comfort.

CLAUDIA

It has so much that is good in it—and so much evil.

GEOFFREY

There you go again! I must dress. (*He rises from the couch. Claudia catches the edge of his robe and holds him back.*) Miss Kitts, don't do that! Remember I am in my pajamas.

CLAUDIA

Yes.

GEOFFREY

Well, let go my bath-robe.

CLAUDIA

Not until I am forgiven.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

For what?

CLAUDIA

For making you unhappy.

GEOFFREY

You are forgiven.

CLAUDIA

Oh, that isn't real forgiveness.

GEOFFREY

You're the most annoying person! You don't keep your word! Let go my bath-robe!

CLAUDIA

I want to hear forgiveness in your voice.

GEOFFREY

Oh, what you will hear in a few moments, if you don't control yourself.

CLAUDIA

Why are you so cross with me?

GEOFFREY

You are flirting with danger.

CLAUDIA

Am I?

GEOFFREY

Yes, you are! Having once lost control of myself, my guard is not as strong as it was, and I might be tempted to repeat my treatment of Janet on you.

CLAUDIA

Oh, now, Geoffrey! My, how her cheeks burned!

GEOFFREY

You are a wicked little minx, and I'm not the

MARCH HARES

only one who thinks so. You are just a temptress.

CLAUDIA

I am behaving perfectly.

GEOFFREY

You are not! You are tempting me.

CLAUDIA

I beg your pardon. You are tempting me. The thought of Janet's burning cheek makes you want to see my cheeks burn. You must not be false to Janet. You mustn't think you can kiss me until I faint in your arms. I never faint.

GEOFFREY

Take care! I am losing control!

CLAUDIA

Oh, no, you are not. You are in quite cold blood!

GEOFFREY

Come here, while I treat you as I did Janet!

CLAUDIA

I won't! You can't kiss me! I shall scream!

GEOFFREY

I don't want to kiss you!

CLAUDIA

Oh, you brute! Go away!

GEOFFREY

Now, Miss, you are so anxious for Janet's treatment. I am going to give it to you!

(Claudia runs from Geoffrey, and dodges round the couch. Geoffrey pursues her, then turns, and meets her on the opposite side.)

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

Help! Help!

(Geoffrey is intercepted by Fuller who enters in answer to Claudia's screams.)

FULLER

Wareham, what are you trying to do?

CLAUDIA

Oh, Mr. Fuller, rescue me!

GEOFFREY

Coward! Just like a woman to work on a man's emotions until they are out of his control, and then to scream for help. Well, there's your help! Now work on his emotions.

(Geoffrey seizes the eiderdown and runs upstairs with it.)

FULLER

What was he trying to do?

CLAUDIA

I couldn't tell you, but I have never been so frightened in my life!

FULLER

Within twelve hours Wareham has rendered two women speechless about themselves. What does he do to them?

CLAUDIA

Why, he's terrifying! But I am sorry I screamed, because I should just like to know what he was going to do.

MARCH HARES

FULLER

May I venture the opinion that you are a little inquisitive?

CLAUDIA

What makes you think that?

FULLER

Haven't you rather set your cap at Wareham?

CLAUDIA

What an awful phrase! Set my cap at him! I didn't think you had an ordinary streak in you!

FULLER

Oh, yes, I am very ordinary. My occupations in life, and my observations of life are all ordinary, and ordinarily speaking I am sure people would say that you set your cap at Wareham.

CLAUDIA

Oh! I am so disappointed.

FULLER

In what?

CLAUDIA

In you. I didn't think you had an unworthy opinion of women.

FULLER

I have a very high opinion of them.

CLAUDIA

You have a dreadful opinion of me, and every woman judges women by herself.

FULLER

Pardon me, a woman judges women by everybody but herself.

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

That shows you don't know women.

FULLER

I know you fairly well, and I haven't such a dreadful opinion of you. It isn't so dreadful to flirt now and then.

CLAUDIA

Flirt! How can you call fighting flirting.

FULLER

Fighting?

CLAUDIA

Yes; can't you see the way I have been fighting Geoffrey Wareham? He has been impelling me for weeks.

FULLER

You surprise me.

CLAUDIA

And you mistook my feeble struggle against him for a flirtation with him. Oh, I did think you were different!

FULLER

I am. I haven't been impelling you, have I?

CLAUDIA

You wouldn't impel anyone.

FULLER

Thanks.

CLAUDIA

No. That is why I am inclined to like you. A woman doesn't want to be agitated all the time.

MARCH HARES

FULLER

I am quite conscious that I do not agitate a soul.

CLAUDIA

It's a pity women have no attraction for you.

FULLER

I must protest.

CLAUDIA

Now, come—be honest.

FULLER

I wouldn't dare be honest with you. But I certainly can't let that last insult go unchallenged.

CLAUDIA

Mr. Fuller, have I insulted you?

FULLER

It is hardly a compliment to say that women have no attraction for me.

CLAUDIA

I didn't see how they could have. If you are an adventurer.

FULLER

Why not?

CLAUDIA

Well, a big game hunter cannot afford to be affected by a lioness. He has to be absolutely unafraid of her—to meet her on an equal footing—her life or his! And he certainly cannot afford to have any emotion about trapping her alive—or killing her.

MARCH HARES

FULLER

Who the devil is a big game hunter?

CLAUDIA

You said you were an explorer—an adventurer.

FULLER

You are, by George! You are!

CLAUDIA

What?

FULLER

A big-game hunter. You know you are! And you don't come home from a trip without some pelt or other.

CLAUDIA

Now you are trying to frighten me.

FULLER

I am. You were out for Wareham's scalp, and you couldn't get it. So now you are out for mine!

CLAUDIA

Mr. Fuller!

FULLER

You know that I am sensitive about my unattractiveness to women and you are taunting me with being unattracted by them. It's a rotten trick. But you shan't get away with it. You have met your Waterloo!

CLAUDIA

Now don't try any of Geoffrey's tactics, or I shall scream again.

FULLER

Go ahead and scream. It won't do you a bit

MARCH HARES

of good. I was the only one to come to your help. No one else will lift a finger, because everyone will know that what I'm going to do is right.

CLAUDIA

What are you going to do?

FULLER

I am going to propose to you, and it makes no difference whether you accept or not, because you are certainly going to marry me.

CLAUDIA

Marry you!

FULLER

Yes.

CLAUDIA

But I don't think I want to marry.

FULLER

You will before I am through with you. The main point is that I want to marry—see? And I am sick of being refused and shelved and laughed at.

CLAUDIA

You are?

FULLER

Yes. There's no reason on God's earth why you shouldn't marry me and every reason why you should. You will get into some awful mess soon if you don't.

CLAUDIA

But Mr. Fuller!

MARCH HARES

FULLER

Don't "Mr. Fuller" me! Call me "Edgar"!

CLAUDIA

I beg your pardon—Edgar—but why should I get into a mess if I don't marry you?

FULLER

Because you're looking for trouble all the time. You have been setting your cap at the wrong type of man—see? But when you started to set it at me you struck the right type—see? And I always take up a challenge—SEE?

CLAUDIA

Yes, I see.

FULLER

Oh, you do. That's good! Well, what are you going to do about it?

CLAUDIA

I don't know. This is so different from what I expected.

FULLER

Exactly. What you expected was that I should let you scalp me, wasn't it?

CLAUDIA

Not at all.

FULLER

Oh, yes it was.

CLAUDIA

But it wasn't. I knew that you were a wonderfully virile man, and I felt that you could be a staunch friend.

MARCH HARES

FULLER

Then why did you ridicule me?

CLAUDIA

But I didn't.

FULLER

But you did. You have said the most disgraceful things to me ever since you arrived.

CLAUDIA

Mr. Fuller!

FULLER

Wha-at?

CLAUDIA

I mean Edgar.

FULLER

That's better. Well, this is what you get for it—see? You wanted an elocutionary Adonis, and you will have to put up with an athletic glass-blower.

CLAUDIA

Oh, do give me time to think.

FULLER

You had time to think about that sermon on the way home, and if you had prayed for results you couldn't have received them more quickly.

CLAUDIA

Results to what?

FULLER

To the sermon, "Fishers of Men." You cast your net, and you caught a porpoise!

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

A polar bear!

FULLER

All right! They can hug!

(Fuller takes her in his arms and gives her a very powerful embrace.)

CLAUDIA

Oh! Oh! Oh! Help! Help!

(During this Janet comes downstairs, dressed for the street. Mrs. Rodney also enters from the dining room.)

JANET

Claudia! Every time I come downstairs, must I find you being embraced by somebody?

MRS. RODNEY

Miss Kitts, we never allow that sort of thing in the sitting room.

JANET

I am sure it is not Claudia's fault, mother.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, but I know it is. She went to church and got all excited by a sermon.

JANET

Claudia, will you go up and pack your things?

CLAUDIA

Yes, Janet—at once—but—please don't be too hard on him, will you?

(With mock shame Claudia goes upstairs. Janet goes to the window and looks out.)

MARCH HARES

FULLER

I am afraid you will never understand.

JANET

I have no desire to.

MRS. RODNEY

I understand, Mr. Fuller. Here, drink this coffee; you must be quite exhausted.

FULLER (*taking the coffee*)

Thank you, Mrs. Rodney. Please don't think I mean any harm to Miss Kitts. I intend to marry her.

MRS. RODNEY

Marry her!

JANET

I don't know whether that will be harmful or not.

MRS. RODNEY

Marry her! My! How fast things do happen in this house. We have never had such an active week-end. Well, it would be a very good thing for her—but I think you will feel better when you have drunk that coffee.

FULLER

She might do worse, don't you think?

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, I am sure she has.

FULLER

I am quite willing to see her parents, and I won't say that I met her here.

MARCH HARES

JANET

I don't know her parents, but I fail to see why you shouldn't have met her here.

FULLER

Nor do I, for that matter, but I thought—

JANET

No doubt you have thought a great deal, Mr. Fuller, and so have I. And I am not in any mood for a discussion. I don't think I shall wait for Claudia. Will you say good-bye to her for me.

FULLER

Yes. I'll go and tell her.

(Fuller runs upstairs.)

MRS. RODNEY

Janet, you aren't going away.

JANET

I am, mother. I have packed a small trunk. Please send it after me to this address. *(She hands Mrs. Rodney a little slip of paper.)*

MRS. RODNEY

Now whatever are you up to, Janet? Why, you haven't had a thing to eat today.

JANET

Please don't irritate me, mother.

MRS. RODNEY

Are you leaving because of Geoffrey? What did he do?

JANET

Please don't ask me.

MARCH HARES

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, sit down—sit down— Take your hat off and I'll get you some coffee. You are awfully weak. You aren't going to faint again, are you?

JANET

Don't speak of that.

MRS. RODNEY

Now tuck up here, and I'll bring you some coffee and a little something to eat in just a minute.

JANET

No, no. He might find me here.

MRS. RODNEY

Who? Geoffrey?

JANET

Yes.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh. He always takes two hours to dress and shave and all that.

JANET

Yes. Twelve hours a day to make himself comfortable, and the other twelve to make people uncomfortable. The selfish brute! How I hate him!

MRS. RODNEY

Janet!

JANET

Oh, why doesn't God send a red-blooded man to this house?

MRS. RODNEY

He has sent enough people already. Besides,

MARCH HARES

you're in no condition to meet a red-blooded man.

JANET

Oh, I am! I am!

MRS. RODNEY

Janet, really!

JANET

Bring one here, and I'll show you!

MRS. RODNEY

I don't want to be shown anything more. Relax, Janet! You must relax! I'll get you some coffee for your nerves. (*The door bell rings.*) Who can that be? I couldn't have invited anyone to dinner and forgotten it. I hope it isn't one of Geoffrey's friends.

(*Enter Oliver.*)

OLIVER

It's Brown!

MRS. RODNEY

Brown!

OLIVER

He wants to see Mr. Wareham, ma'am.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, but he can't see him in here. Get him into the kitchen.

(*Oliver turns to go and meets Brown in the door.*)

BROWN (*looking at Janet*)

Is this Mrs. Rodney?

MRS. RODNEY

No. I am Mrs. Rodney. That is Miss Rodney.

MARCH HARES

BROWN (*pleased*)

Oh.

OLIVER

Can I be any assistance, ma'am?

MRS. RODNEY

I'll call you if I want you.

(*Oliver goes into the library.*)

MRS. RODNEY

Mr. Brown, you came to see me about Ethel, didn't you?

BROWN

I did, Mrs. Rodney.

MRS. RODNEY

Yes. Well, sit down, won't you?

BROWN

Thank you.

MRS. RODNEY

I hardly know what to say. You're so different from what I expected. That is, from what I imagined you would be like.

BROWN

I should like to see Mr. Wareham.

MRS. RODNEY

He—he'll be down shortly. He is dressing at the moment. He didn't sleep very well—that is, he slept very well, but rather late.

BROWN

Indeed.

MRS. RODNEY

Mr. Brown, you mustn't pay too much atten-

MARCH HARES

tion to him. He is occasionally rather eccentric, and he doesn't mean everything he says. You see he teaches elocution, and an elocutionist uses words a little differently from other people.

BROWN

Does he?

MRS. RODNEY

Yes. Geoffrey is quite unusual.

BROWN

His photograph is unusual—unusually good-looking.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh—you've seen his photograph?

BROWN

Ethel has quite a number of them. (*Janet moves to the window in disgust.*) By the way, may I see her?

MRS. RODNEY

She left last night.

BROWN

Left?

MRS. RODNEY

Yes; at about midnight. Haven't you seen her today?

BROWN

No. She telephoned me this morning that she wanted me to come and fetch her.

MRS. RODNEY

Fetch her from where?

MARCH HARES

BROWN

From your house.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, well, she must be coming back. She hasn't returned yet.

BROWN

No? You don't happen to know where she spent last night?

MRS. RODNEY

With the cook, I suppose. They left together. I suppose you became engaged to Ethel during the war?

BROWN (*ogling Janet*)

Engaged? Just before.

MRS. RODNEY

Yes. Everyone was doing funny things—I mean—Mr. Brown, you seem so—charming—so gentle—so unlike anyone Ethel would marry—that is—well, what I really wanted to say was—don't be too severe on Geoffrey. When he said that Ethel was loose, he didn't mean it in the ordinary sense of the word. He didn't mean that she was really loose—that is—well, you know—not loose as we—

BROWN

Don't explain, Mrs. Rodney. I agree with Mr. Wareham. Ethel is very loose.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, well—of course you know her much better than I do, but I assure you she wasn't loose with Geoffrey.

MARCH HARES

BROWN

If you mean that Mr. Wareham was not loose with her, I believe you. Men are far too nice to her. She's loose with everyone.

MRS. RODNEY

What a comfort.

BROWN

I find it rather a bore.

MRS. RODNEY

I mean that you are sure about Geoffrey.

BROWN

I'm not, but I give him the benefit of the doubt until I meet him.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, but you can't meet him in here. Oh, no, he never comes in here. (*Indicating the door of the library.*) You go in there, and when he comes down I'll tell him you're here—I mean there. (*Brown hesitates at the door and looks at Janet.*) Oh, Mr. Brown, you're not red-blooded, are you?

BROWN

I beg your pardon.

MRS. RODNEY

Well, you mustn't be red-blooded here—I mean, think of your blue blood if you have any, but for my sake don't be red-blooded.

BROWN

I don't understand.

MRS. RODNEY

I can't explain. This is a crisis in my family,

MARCH HARES

and I'm not young enough for crises. Please go in there and concentrate on blue before you meet Mr. Wareham or my daughter again. (*As he goes.*) Blue! Mr. Brown!

(*Brown retires.*)

MRS. RODNEY

Janet, he's dangerous! Now I put you on your honor. He's in there thinking of blue, and for heaven's sake don't make him see red, whatever your own feelings may be. I'll get your coffee.

(*She trots out. Janet goes to the key-hole and tries to see Brown through it. Claudia enters and sees Janet doing this.*)

CLAUDIA

Janet! What are you doing? Oh, I know! Geoffrey's in there! Doesn't he look wonderful through a key-hole?

(*Enter Fuller. He has Claudia's boudoir slippers*)

CLAUDIA

Good-bye, Janet. Excuse me if I seem in a hurry. I've had such a good time. Thank you so much for inviting me.

FULLER

You forgot to pack these; they were just inside your door.

CLAUDIA

Thank you.

FULLER

Let me put them in your bag for you.

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

No, thank you.

(Enter Geoffrey.)

GEOFFREY

Well, well, what's the fuss?

CLAUDIA

You!

GEOFFREY

What is so surprising about me? Are you going to church again?

FULLER

No. Miss Kitts and I are going to be married.

GEOFFREY

Good!

CLAUDIA

We are not! Give me my bag.

FULLER

I'll carry it for you.

CLAUDIA

No, thank you.

GEOFFREY

Miss Kitts, don't be unreasonable. Fuller and I decided last night that he should marry you.

CLAUDIA

I refuse! Won't someone come to my rescue?
Janet!

JANET

Mr. Fuller, kindly give Miss Kitts her bag.

MARCH HARES

FULLER

I have a proprietary right in it, Miss Rodney.

CLAUDIA

He has not!

FULLER

Last night you said you wanted to gamble and lose. You have done it.

JANET

Please remember that this is my house and that Miss Kitts is my guest.

GEOFFREY

Well, it's also my house, and Fuller is my guest.

JANET

I insist that Miss Kitts shall leave if she wants to.

GEOFFREY

Not before she promises to pay her gambling debts.

CLAUDIA

I never heard of such a thing! The idea of my being held like this! Janet, if you don't use your authority at once, I shall believe that you brought me here to be trapped.

JANET

Claudia, don't talk like that.

CLAUDIA (*stamping her feet with rage*)

I have been accused of everything by everybody. I never was so insulted in my life. And I have only tried to be nice to everyone. I have had nothing to eat today but the flimsiest breakfast, and the only excuse given is that the

MARCH HARES

servants have left. I suppose I am blamed for that, too.

JANET

Now, Claudia, don't be unreasonable!

CLAUDIA

Unreasonable! I am in a very weak state, I would have you know. These two men won't leave me alone. I tell one the truth about myself in a purely impersonal manner, and he calls me a Jezebel. And the other man I tell the truth about himself and he chases me up and downstairs trying to marry me. I can't bear it!

JANET

Claudia, please control yourself!

CLAUDIA

I should have thought *you* would have had more sympathy for me, Janet. But for me you would have passed right out of your faint into a peaceful death. I sprayed you with eau de cologne, didn't I? I listened to your babblings all night, didn't I? And now you are going to let this man marry me!

JANET

I forbid Mr. Fuller to marry you!

CLAUDIA

It's no use forbidding it! Do something! Have him arrested! Have Mr. Wareham arrested! I was trying to tell him how atrociously he had treated you, and all he could think of in the way of gratitude was to do the same thing to me as he did to you.

MARCH HARES

JANET

He wouldn't dare!

CLAUDIA

Oh, yes he would. He chased me round and round this couch until Mr. Fuller rescued me. Then Mr. Fuller, by way of comforting me, makes violent love to me, and wants to marry me. Oh, I like your sense of hospitality—and I'm going to faint.

GEOFFREY

I thought you never fainted.

(Enter Mrs. Rodney with a cup of coffee and a sandwich.)

MRS. RODNEY

Who is fainting now?

JANET

Claudia thinks she may be going to. Give her the coffee, mother.

MRS. RODNEY

But I made it for you, Janet.

CLAUDIA

There she goes! She's against me, too!

MRS. RODNEY

Here you are, Miss Kitts. Drink this and you'll feel better. What is it all about?

FULLER

She doesn't want to marry me.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, well, that's nothing to faint about. I am sure Mr. Fuller won't mind.

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

What do you mean?

MRS. RODNEY

He need never be hard up for a wife. Have the sandwich.

CLAUDIA

Thank you, Mrs. Rodney. I don't want him to be hard up for a wife. But why should I marry him? Why does everyone have such definite ideas for me? I suppose it is because I was born in May.

EVERYONE

Oh-h!

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, please don't start that again.

CLAUDIA

But you see, directly I walked into this house trouble began. If you would only let me go, all your troubles would cease.

MRS. RODNEY

You had no difficulty in going this morning. You are perfectly free to leave now.

CLAUDIA

But I am not. Mr. Fuller will follow me.

GEOFFREY

You thought I should follow you this morning, but I didn't.

CLAUDIA

Well, I don't think any of you are very polite. You seem most anxious to get rid of me.

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Well, what do you want?

(Geoffrey seizes her sandwich and throws it to the ceiling.)

CLAUDIA *(stamping her feet)*

I want to be set free, but I don't want to be driven out, and I don't want to be followed.

GEOFFREY

You are making a ridiculous fuss over nothing.

CLAUDIA

I am behaving marvellously.

GEOFFREY

You said that once before today when you were deliberately tempting me.

CLAUDIA

I wasn't tempting you. You were trying to do the same thing to me that you did to Janet.

GEOFFREY

I should have if Fuller hadn't interrupted.

CLAUDIA

There you are—you see!

JANET

I won't tolerate this discussion! Claudia, you can't possibly know what Geoffrey did to me, or you wouldn't mention it before me.

CLAUDIA

I'm sorry, Janet.

JANET

But upon my soul, I think you deserve it, and I've a good mind to do it myself.

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

Janet!

JANET

Yes; I've a good mind to slap your face!

GEOFFREY

Oh—Janet!

CLAUDIA

Slap my face? Is that what Mr. Wareham did to you?

JANET

It is.

GEOFFREY

Janet! Please!

CLAUDIA

And to think of my wasting all my sympathy on you just for a slap in the face.

JANET

Well, what do you suppose he did?

CLAUDIA

Why—kissed you desperately—madly—passionately. I thought he had awakened love in you—made you realize how cold you are and how you had been wasting your time.

GEOFFREY

You have wasted enough. You have made love to two men, and you couldn't get either.

CLAUDIA

I don't need either. I have one of my own.

JANET

Really, Claudia!

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

And I won't commit bigamy until I really want to.

MRS. RODNEY

Bigamy!

(Brown enters.)

BROWN

You won't have to.

(Claudia runs up to Brown and throws her arms around him.)

CLAUDIA

Barry!

GEOFFREY

And who may this be?

MRS. RODNEY

It's Brown! Run, Geoffrey!

GEOFFREY

Miss Kitts seems able to hold him.

CLAUDIA

What were you doing in there, Barry?

JANET

I put him there.

CLAUDIA

You!

MRS. RODNEY

No, she didn't. I did. And, Miss Kitts, it's one thing for you to flirt with the immediate family circle, but please do not involve yourself with the relations of the servants.

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

Relations of the servants? What does she mean?

BROWN

I don't know.

MRS. RODNEY

That is Mr. Brown, the fiancé of Ethel the housemaid; he was a sergeant in the army, and he's come here to clean out the whole lot of us.

CLAUDIA

Mrs. Rodney, are you ill? This is my husband. He was a colonel in the army, and he's come here to fetch me.

MRS. RODNEY

His name's Brown—he told me so himself!

CLAUDIA

Yes. Barry Brown, of Brown and Brown, the Sporting Outfitters.

MRS. RODNEY

Why, that's where I bought my water-wings.

GEOFFREY

One might know that he sold water-wings.

JANET

But your name isn't Ethel.

CLAUDIA

It's my middle name. No one calls me by it but Barry, and he only does it to annoy me.

JANET

How many names do you go by?

CLAUDIA

Never more than two. Kitts was my maiden

MARCH HARES

name, and I took it for elocutionary purposes. How could I become a successful actress with the name of Ethel Brown?

GEOFFREY

I should give up elocution and stick to the water-wings.

BROWN

I seem to be the cause of confusion.

JANET

Well, Mr. Brown, you see we have a housemaid called Ethel, whose young man is a Mr. Brown, and we were expecting him.

BROWN

I am sorry to disappoint you.

JANET

You haven't.

BROWN

I'm glad. But I owe you an apology. I have made similar apologies on similar occasions. Ethel's hobby is to get herself into scrapes, and have me get her out of them.

GEOFFREY

Charming hobby.

BROWN (*to Geoffrey*)

I encourage it because whenever I go to fetch Ethel from one of her escapades, I meet such delightful people.

GEOFFREY

I am not conscious of having met you.

BROWN

Miss Rodney and I are great friends already.

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

That explains the key-hole.

GEOFFREY

Mr. Brown. Your loose wife is becoming violent. Remove her!

MRS. RODNEY

Now, Geoffrey!

CLAUDIA

I found her at the key-hole, I tell you!

JANET

You little sneak!

CLAUDIA

How dare you look at my husband through a key-hole?

JANET

I didn't know he was your husband.

GEOFFREY

That's worse.

MRS. RODNEY

Don't get excited, all of you! Janet is merely interested in Mr. Brown because he's a red-blooded man.

GEOFFREY

What is so exceptional in that?

FULLER

No one gives me a chance to be red-blooded.

MRS. RODNEY

Now don't get excited, Mr. Fuller. I'm going to take care of you and find the right wife for you.

MARCH HARES

FULLER

I simply object to Mr. Brown's blood being featured.

GEOFFREY

One moment. You think I'm not red-blooded, do you, Janet? Do you want me to prove it?

MRS. RODNEY

No, no, Geoffrey. Please don't prove anything.

GEOFFREY

Leave the room—everyone, but Janet.

MRS. RODNEY

Geoffrey, what are you going to do?

GEOFFREY

Never mind! I'm going to teach this young lady once and for all.

MRS. RODNEY

Oh, my God!

GEOFFREY

I'll give everyone thirty seconds to leave.

MRS. RODNEY (*trying to go to Janet*)

Janet!

GEOFFREY

Take these people out!

MRS. RODNEY

Mr. Fuller—rescue Janet!

JANET

I don't want to be rescued.

MRS. RODNEY

Mr. Brown, if you really were a colonel in the army, give Geoffrey a command!

MARCH HARES

CLAUDIA

Don't you dare!

BROWN

My first duty is to my wife.

GEOFFREY

I'm waiting!

CLAUDIA

Mr. Fuller—give my bag to my husband.

FULLER

May I keep the boudoir slippers?

CLAUDIA

Yes; and I hope someone will step into my shoes.

GEOFFREY

Fifteen seconds!

MRS. RODNEY

Geoffrey, I wish I had never set eyes on you!

GEOFFREY

Go and make coffee for everyone, Mother Janet.

MRS. RODNEY

Large cups or demi-tasses?

GEOFFREY

Large cups.

(Claudia, Brown, and Fuller go quickly into the dining room.)

MRS. RODNEY

Heaven protect you, Janet, and whatever you do, Geoffrey, remember that I thoroughly disapprove. *(And she flusters out.)*

MARCH HARES

GEOFFREY

Now, then, what do you mean by it?

(Janet pays no attention, but reads a book. Geoffrey seizes the book and throws it away, grabbing her wrist.)

GEOFFREY

Listen to me!

JANET

Let go my wrist.

GEOFFREY

I won't.

JANET

Then hold it! Hold it!

GEOFFREY *(releases her hand. She walks away. He runs after her and catches her)*

Come here! Come here! How dare you say I'm not red-blooded!

JANET

I'm just waiting for you to prove it.

GEOFFREY

You are! You think you'll make me jealous by flirting with that man! Jealous! Ha! That's funny! How dare you flirt with him!

JANET

You don't care!

GEOFFREY

I should say I don't. But I just want you to know that I won't stand for it. I'm going to show you my red blood in a way you haven't thought of. *(He flings Janet on the couch.)*

MARCH HARES

JANET

Good!

GEOFFREY

I was going to apologize for last night. Now I'm going to do something far worse than I did then. I'll teach you to insult me and flirt with another man! Do you know what I'm going to do?

JANET

I hope so.

GEOFFREY

From now on I'm going to cut you dead! You don't exist for me! I'm going to ignore you!

JANET (*rising in anger*)

Oh, you are! I'll teach you to ignore me! Ignore that!

(*She gives him a resounding slap on the face.*)

GEOFFREY

Janet! (*He sinks on to the couch, utterly crushed.*)

JANET

Oh, did I hurt you? I didn't mean to—not as much as that! Please forgive me, Geoffrey. Say something—won't you? Geoffrey, forgive me—I love you—I love you.

GEOFFREY (*rising and running to the door*)

Oliver! Oliver!

OLIVER (*entering*)

Yes, sir.

GEOFFREY

Pack a trunk for me—a large one—and put

MARCH HARES

in everything I shall need for the summer. Plenty of hosiery and no stiff collars. Not less than four suits; and please don't forget my dress trousers. Remember the disgrace you brought upon me last year. Then, in my suitcase be sure to include the Eau de Quinine and the witch hazel, and don't roll up the tooth paste without a screw top in the pajamas. Hurry up, please.

OLIVER

Will you take your bedspread, sir?

GEOFFREY

One doesn't mention such things on a honeymoon.

(Janet runs into his arms.)

OLIVER

Pardon me, sir, but haven't you forgotten something?

GEOFFREY

Forgotten what?

OLIVER

To get married, sir.

GEOFFREY

Not at all. Go and get a license, you fool!

(He folds Janet to his bosom and the curtain abbreviates their embrace.)

